

Raymond, Peter ORCID:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0462-8984> (2019) Creativity and/or performativity? A critical case study of tensions experienced by pre-service and early career teachers. Doctoral thesis, York St John University.

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**Creativity and/or performativity?  
A critical case study of tensions experienced  
by pre-service and early career teachers.**

**Peter Geoffrey Raymond**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy

York St John University

School of Education

May 2019

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## Acknowledgments

There have been many people who have supported me in the production of this thesis; too many to name. However, I would like to single out a few of those people for thanks.

Professor Jean McNiff: Jean started me on this journey. She persuaded me to take up doctoral research, when that was the last thing on my mind.

Professor Julian Stern who offered encouragement in the early days and Dr Tony Leach who helped me to refocus after a break in my studies.

Two colleagues at York St John with whom I have discussed this thesis on many occasions and who have been a great encouragement over a long period of time: Caroline Elbra-Ramsay and Ian Wilson.

The many other colleagues at York St John who have encouraged and cajoled me, often by just asking how my PhD was going: Keith Parker, Helen Rowe, Margaret Meredith, Jenny Carpenter, David Scott, Helen Price, Richard Day, Louise Whitfield, Charlotte Haines Lyon, Emma Walker, Kerry Edwards, Simon Kumar, Katy Bloom, Sally Maynard, Helen Glasspoole-Bird and Professor Dean Garratt.

The fantastic students and colleagues who have been my participants – ‘Simon’; ‘Sarah’; ‘Mike’; ‘Sonia’; ‘Evelyn’; ‘Stuart’; ‘Carla’ – thank you for your time and engagement.

Also, thanks to the many students who have expressed interest in and support of my PhD work, and those who have been involved in focus groups, that ultimately were not used in this thesis – sorry!

My wonderful wife, Heather, who has, especially in the late stages, put up with the intrusions into family life and my periods of grumpiness.

Friends and family from outside of work who have offered consistent encouragement: my sons, Matt and Dan and friends Chantal, Andy and Lauren.

Dr Rob Creasy, who, although he joined my supervision team relatively late, has been invaluable in helping me to ‘bring the thesis home’.

Finally, Professor Matthew Clarke, who has been my supervisor since 2014 and without whom I could not have finished this thesis. He has been a taskmaster and an inspiration.

To you all, I give a heartfelt “thank you”.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late Mum and Dad. My Dad especially, as an artist and teacher, was always interested in the focus of my studies. I dearly wanted to finish this thesis before he died. *I’m sorry Dad that I did not make it on time, but I know that you and Mum would be very proud.*

## Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to illuminate the relationship between creativity and performativity in English primary schools and Initial Teacher Education (ITE). It focusses on exploring the views and experiences of student and early career teachers and ITE leaders, as they negotiate the tensions between creativity and performativity in schools and in ITE itself.

In the climate of substantial, complex changes in education policy (Espinoza 2015) and an increasing focus on performative accountabilities, creativity has, arguably, lost its essence (Mould 2018). The growth of neoliberalism, now widely regarded as the dominant ideology (Moore 2018), has led to an education system, where managerial approaches of surveillance and targets are commonplace. Schools and ITE departments are judged, rewarded and sanctioned based on inspections and pupil and student teacher outcome data. They have seen a shift towards the logic of performativity (Flint and Peim 2012), which lies in the neoliberal logic of competition between schools (Clarke and Moore 2013). This logic has become a normative force (Locke 2013), potentially suppressing teachers' freedoms to practice creatively.

The thesis builds a theoretical framework around three key thinkers. Firstly, Bourdieu and the notion of habitus. Secondly, Foucault and his ideas around power and self-formation. Thirdly Lacan's psychoanalytical perspectives, including the concept of 'lack'. From Lacan, Ruti develops the idea of 'lack', in the context of creativity and agency.

Using a case study approach and interviews, the findings provide evidence to suggest that meaningful and authentic creativity for emerging qualified teachers, lies in the development of a robust creative agency, that allows them to resist

performative pressures, developing ways of teaching that have meaning for them; the 'art of living' (Ruti 2009).

The thesis concludes by proposing a model for ITE, that will help student teachers to develop the 'the art of living' into 'the art of teaching'.

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

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QTS:	Qualified Teacher Status
NQT:	Newly Qualified Teacher
DfE:	Department for Education
ITE:	Initial Teacher Education
Ofsted:	The Office for Standards in Education
SEND:	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SPaG:	Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (a part of statutory English tests)
TDA:	Training and Development Agency
SE 1, 2, 3:	School Experience (formal school placements as part of the Primary Education course. 1, 2 and 3 refer to years 1, 2 and 3 of the three-year course.
APF	Advanced Professional Focus. A set of elective final year university modules. The module referred to here is called <i>Creativity in Primary Education</i> .

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the thesis

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This introductory chapter will begin a brief articulation of what this thesis is about, followed by a rationale for undertaking the research. The key research questions will then be discussed with an outline of the contexts in which the research was conducted. The chapter will then outline the key arguments and contribution that the thesis will put forward, followed by a brief examination of the role of the researcher within the study. The chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the thesis and its structure.

### 1.1 What this thesis is about

The thesis title is '*Creativity and/or performativity? A critical case study of tensions experienced by pre-service and early career teachers*'. This thesis is about the tensions that can arise, between the pressures of performativity in primary education and primary ITE and the development of creativity in teaching and learning in those contexts. The thesis examines these potentially competing foci, exploring how the development of teacher identity and agency can enable student teachers, newly qualified teachers and teacher educators to practice with a degree of creative freedom and autonomy, within a performative culture. In exploring these tensions, a theoretical base will be established to illuminate the (potentially) competing ideas of creativity and performativity. Then, a theoretical framework will be built, to support the ideas about how professionals in these contexts may experience - and potentially resist or challenge - performative discourses and constraints on their thinking and practice. This theoretical framework will be built, forefronting three key theorists. I start with Bourdieu and his ideas of 'habitus', forms of capital and 'symbolic violence'. Foucault's ideas of power and control will be explored to add to the

framework, drawing in particular on his later work around subjectivity and ‘care of the self’, to open up more agentic perspectives. The themes of self-formation and agency will be developed further through the psychoanalytical perspectives of Lacan, and from those, the ideas of Ruti.

The practical research is a case study of pre-service teachers studying BA (Hons) Primary Education, and teacher educators, all in my own Initial Teacher Education (ITE) department. The primary education degree leads to the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and therefore has a professional career focus, centred around the student (pre-service) teachers being judged to have met the Teacher Standards (Department for Education [DfE] 2012); that judgement and successful completion of the degree is what will lead to the award of QTS. The data and findings from this case study will be presented and discussed in three sets, each with its own theme. The overall findings will be discussed, from which the core arguments and contribution of the thesis will be articulated. Whilst the thesis engages with some themes of significant pressures and constraints of performative cultures on student and early career teachers, the thesis, as will be seen, is ultimately one of optimism.

Focus now turns to an explanation of the underlying rationale for the research.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Having worked for twenty-one years (1985 – 2006) as a primary school teacher and Headteacher in five schools, I developed a passion, for what I saw as creative approaches to teaching and learning, both as a class teacher and for the second half of that period, as a school leader. I experienced periods of significant freedom in my early career, before the 1988 Education Reform Act and the accountabilities that grew from that and remain today. I taught in schools through several incarnations of



the national curriculum, the growth of Ofsted, statutory testing, league tables and performance management. My first primary school headship appointment was to a school that had just been put into special measures. That was very small 'club' of just three schools out of 221 in that Local Authority. In that school, I experienced the enormous performative pressures of being at the very bottom of official designation of school quality. I also had the pleasure of working with a group of teachers, pupils, governors, parents and local authority staff, to bring the school out of special measures and on, to what was judged to be further success. My second headship lay between that post and my subsequent move to ITE. In that school, as a senior leadership team, we were developing a new, quite innovative (at the time) and creative approach to the curriculum. However, before that could be embedded, I moved to a job in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). So, my early steps into research had a sense of "unfinished business" with regards to promoting creativity. As my context had changed, so my focus changed to considering the role of ITE in promoting creativity. My rationale was and is about using research to explore what I can do, not just exploring and commenting on an issue.

Creativity is a commonly used word in education circles, yet it is also seen as something that is being squeezed by contemporary agendas of standards, testing and the current national curriculum (Department for Education 2014). These are generally seen as having taken an antcreative direction (Harris 2015; Flood 2016;) and are impacting the work of teachers (Clarke 2013a; Taubman 2009). This pressure to conform, entails at least the potential for the suppression of individuality, creativity and innovation in ways that are likely to harm students (Robinson 2015). So, the rationale behind the thesis is to try and make sense of the tensions between creativity and performativity. I saw the performative pressures increasing as time went on in my career. I experienced seven inspections by The Office for Standards

in Education (Ofsted) before I moved to ITE, at which time they were well established mechanisms in school but only just beginning to affect ITE departments. Since then, I have experienced a further six Ofsted inspections in an ITE context. The effect that Ofsted, or the expectation of Ofsted, can have on schools and ITE to constrain and determine practice, has long concerned me. As long as education policy, and therefore school and ITE departments, remain focused primarily on quantifiable measures of standards and quality, approaching education creatively will be challenging. If a strong sense of creative identity and agency can be forefronted rather than these performative measures, there is scope for teachers to practice creativity as a genuine virtue rather than one side in a struggle (Raymond 2018).

So, the rationale for this thesis crystallised around potential tensions between creativity and performativity. More specifically, the focus came to be exploring how these tensions may be mediated, by developing strong senses of identity and agency in student and early career teachers, that would allow them to practice creatively as teachers, in a performative environment.

Attention now turns to the key questions that the thesis aims to answer.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The research address three key questions. Each one will be discussed briefly.

#### **1.3.1 Are there tensions/struggles, real or perceived, between creative freedoms for teachers and the contemporary performative culture of schools and ITE?**

UK education has seen and remains in a period of rapid and substantial change (Alexander 2010; Robinson 2011) with significant complexity in these reforms that could endanger children's education (Espinoza 2015). This has seen a growing focus on performative measures and what is often called the 'logic of performativity'

(Flint and Peim 2012). This logic lies in the neoliberal view of competition between and autonomy for schools (Clarke and Moore 2013). This has seen a change from earlier applications of market principles to education, for example after the 1988 Education Reform Act, into a more intense involvement of the private sector (or at least private sector principles) in the running and management of schools e.g. free schools and academies. Rudd and Goodson (2017) see these more overt recent moves as a 'reconstituted neo-liberal period' (p.1), involving an attempt to extend and develop earlier privatisation and marketisation approaches into 'an intelligible whole' (p.1). So, a discourse has grown around quality, standards, testing and targets which has become dominated by management approaches and the comparisons of educational outcomes (Biesta 2009). This has resulted in comparisons between schools, Local Authorities and Multi-Academy Trusts (DfE 2018) and even countries, with a government focus on PISA tables, comparing countries on the basis of academic attainment (OECD 2015). The growing focus on data-centric outcomes of pupil/student progress and attainment, has, at least, the potential to restrict creative practice. Such measures arguably direct educational policy and practice: as Biesta (2009; p.43) argues,

The danger here is that we end up valuing what is measured rather than we engage in measurement of what we value.

The logic of performativity can become 'a normative force' (Locke 2103; p.248), providing a powerful driver of practice. Therefore, the first question has become valid for my research, as I have seen these growing pressures over the last twenty years as a Headteacher and teacher educator.

The first question leads to the second. If there *are* tension and struggles between creative freedoms for teachers and the contemporary performative culture of schools and ITE, what theoretical frameworks might be suitable to support the research into

these issues? A theorisation of the human subject emerged as a viable theoretical framework. This led to the second core question of the research.

### **1.3.2 What does an engagement with theorising the human subject have to offer as insights to these struggles?**

This question had its roots in a module (*Creativity in Primary Education*) which I was leading in our Primary Education (QTS) course. As part of this module, student teachers were engaged in the critique of a range of perspectives on creativity. This involved ongoing talk between me as teacher and the students, as well as between students; purposeful dialogue which was intended to develop understanding of the focus concepts (Fisher 2007; 2009). This was a socially constructivist approach (Trudge 1990; Aminch and Asl 2015). Social construction will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3. It builds on the work of Vygotsky, who saw knowledge as the formation or construction of concepts, rather than purely as information (Kozulin et al, 2005). He also argued, that the most interesting and complex processes or knowledge formation, have originated in social interactions (Ageyev, 2005; Miller, 2011); knowledge is seen as being produced through social construction.

Bentley (2001; p. 136) defines creativity as ‘the application of knowledge and skills in new ways to achieve a valued goal’. In considering teacher identity in the context of creativity, Menter (2010) draws on this definition, querying what these ‘new ways’ and ‘valued goals’ may be. This underpins a rationale for developing a critique of creativity, linked to a developing identity as a creative teacher. The aim of the module teaching therefore, was to encourage critique of various perspectives on creativity, with students developing their own perspectives; their own ‘active definitions’ of creativity. The term ‘active definition’ was coined to represent two types of activity; the students were encouraged to revisit their ideas, allowing them to grow and develop; they were also encouraged to apply or live out these definitions in

their subsequent and final school placements. As Al-Dababneh, Al-Zboon and Ahamd (2017) argue, teachers with well-developed conceptualisations of creativity and the belief in their ability and agency to foster creativity, will reflect that in their practice. Therefore, there was a process of social co-construction of new knowledge; new conceptualisations of creativity and creative practice as teachers. So, the focus with the students was on social co-construction of knowledge, their emerging identities as creative teachers, and the application of that knowledge in their subsequent school teaching placements. Bringing these ideas together, as will be seen in chapter 2, an engagement with ideas of self-formation drawing on Bourdieu, Foucault and Lacan, provides a critical and useful theoretical framework, through which to explore how student and early career teacher could navigate and mediate the potential struggles between creativity and performativity.

This, in turn leads to the third question. Having explored a theoretical framework, as described, and the subsequent research with the participants, in what ways might ITE be rethought and approached, as to tackle any tensions or struggles between creativity and performativity, for student and early career teachers?

### **1.3.3 How can approaches to promoting creativity in primary schools and primary ITE, be reconceptualised, so as to mediate and hopefully ameliorate these struggles?**

There is literature around the theme of creativity in primary education (e.g. Wilson 2015; Jones and Wye 2013) focussed on creative approaches to teaching and learning in and across the primary curriculum subjects. These are valid areas of literature that support the development of creative teaching and learning. However, in my early days in ITE, I found that many students wanted the ‘top tips’ approach to ITE, which permeated all areas such as behaviour management and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Teaching curriculum subjects was

similar. Even when the *Creativity in Primary Education* module started, there was a desire for practical ideas. To be clear, there is nothing wrong, in my mind, with sharing good practice and a wealth of experience with student teachers. However, there is a danger that if student teachers are not connecting ideas and experiences in ways that are meaningful for them, ITE can lose authenticity for the individual student if it becomes a ‘tips for teachers’ approach. The introduction of the ‘Professional Standards for Teachers; Qualified Teacher Status’ (Training and Development Agency [TDA] 2007) and the subsequent and current Teacher Standards (DfE 2012), set out in government education policy as criteria for qualification and continuation in the profession, what it meant to be(come) a teacher. Dominant definitions of teaching became more formulaic and technicist (Menter 2010); Clarke and Phelan (2017; p, 78) go further, expressing their

deep concern with the way neo-liberal discourses of accountability, involving unchallengeable, hegemonic, yet also empty, and hence manipulable, notions of ‘quality’ and ‘standards’, have reduced conceptual and practical spaces for engaged and open-ended critique in relation to the ultimate aims and purposes of teaching, learning and education.

So, a third question began to develop for my research, as a response to developments in ITE, that were defining the very essence of be(com)ing a teacher. These included creativity within the articulations of quality and standards (e.g. TDA 2017; QTS Standards Q 8: ‘Have a creative and constructively critical approach towards innovation, being prepared to adapt their practice where benefits and improvements are identified.’). My response centred around what I perceived to be, the need to look at creativity in a less instrumental, ‘top tips’ fashion. Anecdotally, students on placement were feeling pressures to approach teaching in formulaic fashions to satisfy school and now ITE performative, standards-based agendas. If

students were to be creative practitioners, in an increasingly performative climate, a deeper, more authentic approach to encouraging creativity was needed.

Attention now turns to a brief consideration of the contexts in which this research has taken place.

## **1.4 The contexts of the research**

This section serves to contextualise the research. The co-constructivist nature of the research has been outlined. Therefore, it is important to be clear about the contexts in which this research has been carried out. My reflexivity as the researcher will be further discussed in section 1.6 and chapter 3.

### **1.4.1 Past and present roles**

Having worked as a primary school teacher and Headteacher for 21 years, I moved into primary ITE as a senior lecturer. As described earlier, whilst a Headteacher, I experienced intense periods of performative pressure. Moving into ITE, my leadership role diminished significantly until, after four years, I was appointed as Head of Programme for Primary Education. A subsequent university restructuring led me to my current post as Subject Director for Undergraduate ITE. My teaching has been mainly on the Primary Education programmes, teaching primary subjects of geography, science and design-technology, as well as professional studies and the final year elective module, *Creativity in Primary Education*, which I have led since its start. The majority of my teaching lies in the final year of the programmes. The creativity module and subsequent final school placement have been the primary locus of the case study.

In addition to being a teacher and teacher educator, I am also a researcher, before and during my PhD study. However, it is accurate to say that I have struggled, as

have many primary ITE colleagues, to see myself as a researcher. I describe myself primarily as a teacher; developing an identity as teacher/researcher has been difficult. Colleagues in ITE have, like me, long been schoolteachers, coming to university life relatively late on. I can say now, however, that through my PhD project, and those of a rapidly increasing number of colleagues, that identity is much stronger. Ellis et al (2014), assert that research roles in ITE have been more focussed on quality assuring teacher education. They argue for more research in ITE that seeks to transform teacher education and the wider school context. I hope that this thesis will be seen as such, even in a small way.

As the performative culture of education is a key focus of this thesis, as well as part of the context of the research, this will now be discussed and followed up further in chapter 2.

#### **1.4.2 A performative culture in education**

The increasingly performative climate of education is potentially at odds with any desire to promote creative approaches to teaching and learning and to facilitate creative expressions for pupils, students and teachers (Raymond 2018). Ball (2017) discusses the rapid pace and wide scope of reforms. Schools (and therefore, I would argue, ITE) have seen a shift towards the 'logic of performativity' (Flint and Peim 2012, p.155). An increasing agenda of marketisation, competition and accountability (Clarke 2013a) has developed. In ITE and school, teachers' (and therefore student teachers') autonomy and agency

'have been further eroded by professional standards that seek to map and enumerate the work of teachers, define effective teaching and articulate precisely what constitutes teacher quality' (Clarke and Phelan 2017: p.12).



The assumption underpinning the culture of performativity, is that quality, excellence and standards can be quantified, and this quantification then becomes the target of official focus. Newman (2007) argues (albeit not talking about education as such) that this ideology is so entrenched that we no longer recognise it as an ideology as such. Performativity, therefore, has the capacity to shape both what we do but also who we are (e.g. as teachers) and further, the capacity to reshape, in its own image, the organisations or individuals that are being monitored (Ball 2003; 2013). The culture of competition can be seen as so entrenched in education that it can be largely unquestioned; it is accepted without even realising its influence on what we do and therefore remains unchallenged, growing in its power to shape what we do and who we are, operating irrespective of the level of autonomy or centralisation under which an educational institution works.

The growth of the focus on Teachers Standards and Ofsted inspections in ITE has been rapid and immense in my time in the sector. This, as will be explored in depth in the research, has been both a challenge to and driver of creativity. The potential struggle and tensions between performativity and creativity, lie at the very heart of this research. This is why it is necessary to be clear that the research context is within a climate of performativity. It is also vital to add that, my role, as course director, places me firmly in that performative context. I am held accountable for the performance of Primary Education as a course, with measures including the National Student Survey, Ofsted inspections, student placement grades and employment levels on completion. I am also someone who holds students to account, as a key part of the apparatus that is ultimately the arbiter of who is awarded QTS, and at what level of grading, on completion of the Primary Education course. If, as stated earlier, a performative climate of education is potentially at odds with any desire to promote creative approaches to teaching, this research is not one of objective

researcher looking in; I am fundamentally involved with the case study that I am researching, experiencing the very tensions and struggles that are its focus.

### **1.4.3 The research context**

The research was conducted amongst final year student teachers on the Primary Education course of which I am director. They were all taking the elective module *Creativity in Primary Education*. This module, now in its second incarnation, encourages students to critique ideas about creativity, including their own, and then develop new conceptualisations; their own 'active definitions' of creativity. As explained earlier this represents two types of activity; the students are expected to revisit their ideas, allowing them to develop organically; they are also encouraged to apply these definitions in their subsequent school placements. Therefore, this is a process of social co-construction of new knowledge, involving new conceptualisations of creativity and creative practice as teachers.

The placement element of the research is an important context. The students, as explained, were encouraged to put their new ideas into practice. I visited placements, where possible, to see these ideas in action and discuss them, with the student teachers. A key part of my role in ITE is as a 'link tutor'; an overseer of student teachers on placement and part of the quality assurance measures for appraisal, judgements and grading of students on those placements. As will be discussed, it was important for me to uncouple that link tutor role when visiting student teachers for research purposes.

The third research setting was not envisaged at the start but developed later in the project. As well as interviewing the participants near the end of their course, each had a short email interview at the same fixed time after they qualified. As the face to face interviews started in 2012, these follow up interviews (2018) captured

participants' views and experiences as newly or recently qualified teachers, with full professional classroom experience of between one and six years.

#### **1.4.4 The theoretical context**

The theoretical foundations of the thesis will be established in chapter 2. Suffice to say for now, that these theoretical foundations have not been passive and detached from the practical research. The investigation of the struggles and tensions between performativity and creativity in the case study, has been informed and directed by the investigation of the underlying theory around creativity and performativity. The theorising of the human subject has driven the teaching of the creativity module discussed above, which in turn has been a setting for the research. As will be discussed in chapter 3, the collection and analysis of data has involved an interaction between data and theory. In short, the theory is part of the context of the research itself, not a detached foundation.

#### **1.5 The role of the researcher in this study**

As has been touched upon, and will be discussed more fully in chapter 3, my role here is one of close involvement with the participants. I taught them all in an intensive final year module; I visited several of them on their school placements; for all I was their course director. In short, I was not a detached, purely objective researcher, outside of their context and lived experiences. My role has been as the 'traveller' with the participants (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The interview, as a research tool, can be seen as a social construction (Brinkmann 2017); a co-production of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee. Traditional methodological literature may emphasise a passive subjectivity, where information is seen as something that is already there, waiting to be extracted by the researcher who stands detached from that data. A constructionist epistemology sees an active

subjectivity, that appreciates the narrative agency of both researcher and participant (Gubrium and Holstein 2015). In other words, both have a full role to play in the co-construction of knowledge. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) go further, with the metaphors of the interviewer as miner or traveller. The miner is seen as a knowledge collector, unearthing existing knowledge which is therefore untainted by the researcher. The interviewer, as a traveller, travels to places, talks with people who inhabit them, encourages them to tell their stories and brings back the accounts. Meaning is revealed rather as the accounts are interpreted. So, in the two metaphors, knowledge is either given (miner) or constructed (traveller). My role has been very much as the traveller alongside the participants. So, I have not been a purely objective researcher, looking on from the side-lines. Chapter 3 will argue that, far from weakening the research, this can be seen to enhance it.

## **1.6 The contribution of the research**

Drawing on three theoretical pillars and three sets of case study participants, this thesis presents a view on creativity within a performative climate in something of a middle ground. On one 'side' of this middle ground, lies conceptualisations of creative practice in teaching and learning as ways to approach the curriculum effectively (Cremin 2015). These may be appropriated within a performative climate for their perceived effectiveness. They may also be rejected as not being sufficiently focussed on attaining the performative measure desired. On the other 'side' is a rejection of performativity and its neoliberal, capitalist accountabilities. Creativity is seen as something that has been so appropriated by these accountabilities as to have lost its essence (Mould 2018). The middle ground, I would argue, is not one that is vague or seeking to placate both sides. It is not a rejection of either. It is a view that creativity in education needs to be viewed at a much deeper level than just

creative teaching and learning. It is also a view that recognises and seeks to make sense of the performative climate in which my students and I work. Based on the argument that my contribution occupies this 'middle ground', I would argue that there are five areas of contribution in this thesis.

Firstly, there are combinations of theory that provide valid and useful insights. These start from more (but not necessarily) deterministic explanatory theories (Bourdieu: habitus and forms of capital). These are developed through early Foucauldian idea of power, control and discipline. The theoretical framework then develops through the more agentic later work of Foucault, exploring subjectivity and 'care of the self'. The ideas of agency are then further developed through the psychoanalytical perspectives of Lacan, and from that, Ruti.

Secondly, applying these theoretical combinations in the contexts of creativity and performativity in primary education, the idea of 'creative agency' emerges, both as means to underpin creative practice and as a deep act of personal creativity through self-formation as a creative practitioner. This develops the 'art of living' (e.g. as discussed by Ruti 2009) into the 'art of teaching'.

Thirdly, the research offers insights into how struggles between creativity and performativity may operate: in opposition, in relative states of balance and, as I will argue for my own professional context, most productively when in co-existence. All of these perspectives involve tensions which may be more or less productive.

From these elements, arises the fourth strand of contribution: a model that suggests a role for ITE in supporting student teachers and NQTS in a journey to a more sustainable and authentic level of success. This has potential for them to better

thrive as teachers and beings of meaning and agency, even in a performatively dominated education system.

Finally, the research opens up avenues to pursue a similar set of questions, but with a focus directed more fully on school leaders. Their role in both promoting and constraining creative agency in student teachers and NQTs, will become clear. The research of this role with school leaders was not, however, part of this study. It is a potentially fertile route for further research, developing the 'art of living', through the 'art of teaching', into the 'art of leading'.

To conclude this chapter, I will give a brief overview of the thesis structure.

### **1.7 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis has seven chapters. Following the introductory first chapter, chapter two will establish some contextual theory around creativity and performativity. It will then explore in more depth, a theorisation of the human subject, moving from more deterministic to more agentic perspectives. Three key theorists will be forefronted: Bourdieu, Foucault and Lacan. Building on Lacan's core ideas of the psyche, Ruti's discussions of psychoanalytical perspectives on creativity will also be important. Chapter three, will describe and justify the research methods in detail. Chapters four, five and six will present and discuss the data analysis and findings from three sets of participants. In a manner designed to mirror, to an extent, the move from the more deterministic to the more agentic in chapter two, these three chapters tell a story of largely increasing agency. Chapter seven draws the findings together across all the of the participants, as one case study. It then develops a series of explanatory models which, in turn, lead to a proposed model for a role of ITE in supporting the

creative agency and practice of student and early career teachers. The chapter will then present my overall conclusions and some implications for future research.

I start with a critical review of relevant literature, establishing the core theoretical framework for the thesis.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework that underpins the practical research, data analysis and overall arguments of the thesis. The chapter starts with an exploration of a range of ideas about the nature of creativity as a concept and practice. Performativity will then be similarly explored and the potential tensions between these two ideas will be discussed, with critical reference to appropriate literatures. This chapter will then focus on explorations of the human subject and formation of the self, establishing the basis for the argument, that a sense of identity and agency in students and early career teachers, is an important factor in their freedom to teach creatively in a performative climate. Specifically, a critical engagement will be made with three core areas of focus, each with explanatory perspectives and ideas that are forefronted by a key theorist.

The series of critical discussions will start with Bourdieu's more (but not completely) deterministic explanatory framework of habitus and its role in the control and perpetuation of human thought and activity. The focus moves then to the ideas of Foucault, that explore the interactions between power and discipline and their use in the control of human thought and activity. Staying with Foucault, concepts of subjectivity will be discussed as an explanatory framework, that begins to explore how we may take a more active role in our self-formulation as human subjects. The third focus area will examine the psychoanalytical ideas of Lacan, developing the possibilities of being more active agents in our self-formulation. Lacan's three orders of the psyche and the idea of constitutive "lack" will be discussed. These will be developed further in the context of Ruti's arguments about the relationships between lack and creativity and the 'art of living'. This will allow the theoretical framework to



return full circle to the contextual literatures of creativity and performativity at the start of the chapter. The chapter will conclude with a synthesis of the theories of the human subject, identity, agency, performativity and creativity, laying the foundations for the later discussions arising from the empirical research findings of this study.

This chapter begins with an examination of creativity and the exploration of a range of perspectives as to its meaning.

## **2.1 Creativity**

Creativity is a commonly used word in education circles. It is uncertain as a concept (Cropley 2001) and is hard to pin down; Grigg and Lewis (2019) suggest there are over a hundred definitions. However, it can inspire and motivate beginning and experienced teachers (Jones and Wyse 2013). In schools and in ITE in England, it is seen as something that is being squeezed by contemporary agendas of standards, testing as well as the current national curriculum (DfE 2013), which can be regarded as having taken an antcreative direction (Harris, 2015; Flood, 2016). There is little doubt that education is experiencing increasing pressure to focus on measurable standards (Ofsted 2017), which is impacting the work of teachers (Taubman 2009; Alexander 2010; Robinson 2011; 2017; Clarke 2013a; Ofsted 2017), and that wherever there is pressure to conform, there is the potential for individuality and creativity to be suppressed and for the standards culture to harm students (Robinson and Aronica 2015).

Creativity is usually understood to be a noun (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). This is perhaps why some conceptualisations of creativity echo the commodification of ideas more widely; a point that will be discussed further, later in this chapter. Jones (2012) and Hawkins (2017) query

whether creativity refers to a property of a creative product or the process through which an individual or group go to create that product. What is clear, is that there is no single perspective on what creativity means. In what follows, perspectives from neuroscience, psychology (with individual and the sociocultural perspectives) and education will be discussed.

Before engaging with this range of theoretical perspectives, I would like to briefly outline my own conceptualisation of creativity. As previously discussed, the focus module of the research (Creativity in Primary Education) engages my students in developing their own 'active definitions' of creativity'. Partly to model the process and partly to engage in critical dialogue and co-construction of new conceptualisations, I discuss with them, my own active definition. For me, that has been an ongoing process through the whole life of this research project, so I am able to share with students many iterations of my active definition. For brevity, I will confine myself here to my current perspective.

For me, creativity is the universal human capacity for purposeful, original and imaginative thinking and activity. Creativity challenges established (even apparently logical) ideas and practices to create meaningful new ideas, practices and things and can work in any field of activity. I reject any notion that creativity lies only in certain fields or school subjects such as art, music, drama etc. I see it as an everyday state of being and therefore may be more usefully conceptualised as a verb rather than as a noun. It is something that we *do* and that we *are*; the capacity only really flourishes in the active living of the capacity. Creativity can tolerate and even thrive in the midst of ambiguity. When lived, it creates "space"; space for such things as freedoms to practice, to think and to develop agency rather than simply following expected or prescribed lines of thinking and ways of behaving.

The first perspective on creativity to be discussed is from the field of neuroscience.

### **2.1.1 Neuroscientific perspectives on creativity**

I am not a neuroscientist, so this section is therefore inevitably “light touch”.

However, the insights of neuroscience have the potential to influence the perspectives of teachers and students (Howard-Jones 2008). Coupled with the later section discussing psychological perspectives, these will add to the overall conceptualisation of creativity and the struggle for its place in a performative educational culture.

A common definition of creativity used in neuroscience (and psychology), regards creativity as requiring two elements; novelty/originality and usefulness/value (Simonton 2018; Howard-Jones 2008). Fuster (2018) offers a similar definition that addresses novelty and value but using the term creative intelligence; ‘the ability to make the new and remake the old for one’s benefit or that of others’ (p.146).

Simonton, however, argues that a third element is crucial; that to be creative, an act, idea or product should also be surprising or ‘nonobvious’ (Simonton 2018; p.10).

These three elements may be manifested in both personal creativity and what he terms consensual creativity. These are referred to as little c and Big C respectively.

The difference in these two ideas, lies in who makes the judgements on the value of a creative act or product that would deem it to be creative. In personal (little c) creativity, self-assessment is sufficient; the value is judged by the creator. For consensual creativity (Big C), the value must be judged by others. As will be seen, where this is discussed later, some psychological perspectives put a higher emphasis on Big C and its expert judges. Simonton appears to make no value difference between little c and Big C, only that they are different. Personal creativity is seen to be as valid as consensual creativity.

Any notion that creativity arises in a single, clearly identifiable spot in the brain is rejected by neuroscientists; 'there is no single, pivotal place in the brain where it [creativity] all comes together' (Dietrich 2015; p.42). Neuroscience sees the brain as a complex processing system, where representations are distributed in many activity streams; neuroscientific analysis of creative processes shows their widespread origins (Fuster 2018). Corballis (2018) argues that creativity depends on neural circuits spread throughout the brain, emphasising that modern neuroscience rejects earlier right/left brain hemisphere polarity theories about the origins of creativity. The creative drive is part of the brain's biological function (Flaherty 2018). From these internal drives, deep within the brains' limbic system, motivations are channelled through the brain cortexes to generate a creation (Fuster 2013). Alongside the work of planning and decision making, these internal drives are necessary for every creation to be realised; 'those neural influences ...constitute the emotional energies of creativity' (Fuster 2013 p.147). The biological origin of creativity lies in the formation and strengthening of synapses in the cerebral cortex. Creation starts when a collection of these networks, or 'cognits', are activated. Networks include memories, prior knowledge and experience, that become associated through these synaptic connections. The activations can generate internal stimuli e.g. a mental image, which in turn activates further networks. Equally, external stimuli can do the same. So, the process starts and continues, helped by internal and external stimuli which activate and develop a range of existing networks within the brain.

Whilst the phrase '*the* creative process' is common, Simonton (2018) states that creativity arises from at least multiple processes including imagination, intuition and divergent thinking. Creative thinking, from a neuroscientific perspective, uses a range of cognitive processes and is often seen as alternating between two modes, generative and analytical. Generative modes create something in the first place,

whilst the analytical is used for evaluating and interpreting outcomes. Creativity is characterised by an ability to move between those two modes of thinking (Howard-Jones 2008). Psychological theories of creativity often describe these two modes as convergent and divergent thinking (Gabora 2018). Convergent thinking is critical and evaluative, often defined and measured in terms of performance on task with a single, correct answer. Divergent thinking tends to be defined and measured in terms of the generation of multiple solutions to problems or situations. From a neuroscientific viewpoint, the brain can move between convergent and divergent thinking, giving a 'contextual focus' (Gabora 2018; p.64). Here, there are alternations between focussed attention, promoting analytical thought, and defocussed attention, allowing more associative thought, allowing nonobvious aspects of a situation to arise. Gabora therefore suggests a different characterisation of convergent and divergent thinking. Convergent thinking should not just be seen as thinking towards generating a single correct answer, but as thinking that stays within conventional contexts. Divergent thinking is not to be seen just in terms of generating lots of possibilities, but as the ability to consider ideas from new perspectives. Whilst these two modes of thinking can be seen in slightly different ways, Howard-Jones (2008) concludes that creativity seems to require a movement between analytical and generative thinking modes. The conditions that promote the two modes are different. Analytical thinking is more likely to be promoted by external rewards, pressures of assessment etc. Generative thinking is more helped by intrinsic motivations such as curiosity and a relaxed, non-judgemental environment.

Motivation is seen as a powerful influencer of creativity (Flaherty 2018). The relationship between motivation and creativity is an example of a 'monotonic assumption', whereby it is assumed that greater motivation promotes greater creativity. Flaherty argues that this a fallacy. As motivation increases so does

creativity, but there will typically be a point at which increased motivation becomes counterproductive. There will typically be a “sweet spot” where creativity is maximised by motivation. From a neuroscientific perspective, two things are crucial to maintain maximum creativity. Firstly, the feedback loops that tell the individual whether they have drifted from the “sweet spot”. Secondly, the responses to that drift. So, these signals and responses enable conscious feedback to help the unconscious controls of the brain, such as attention and motivation. Together these stabilise as long as the signals are accurate, and the responses are prompt.

This section is a brief discussion of the neuroscience of creativity. Whilst neuroscience cannot entirely explain creative processes and expressions, the perspectives potentially add to the understanding of creative teaching and learning. As the argument develops about the struggles between creativity and performativity, such perspectives for example can help teachers to identify when thinking for students needs to be more generative or analytical, more divergent or convergent and to enable transitions between the two (Howard-Jones 2008).

Attention now turns from the brain itself to considering a range of psychological perspectives on creativity, encompassing the individual and social models.

### **2.1.2 Psychological perspectives on creativity**

Psychology is a field rich in writing about creativity. Defining creativity is difficult, but Sawyer (2014) identifies two groups of research that aim to do this. Firstly, are those that seek an individualistic, cognitive definition by studying a person engaging in creative behaviour. Creativity here is defined as ‘a new mental combination that is expressed in the world’ (Sawyer, 2014, p.7). Creativity here is not a repetition, it is a combination of two or more thoughts, generally aimed at solving problems (Sternberg 2003). This combination must be recorded or expressed, thus excluding

any ideas that one may have, but are never communicated to anyone else. The second group are those that seek a sociocultural definition, studying creative people working together in social and cultural contexts. Here, creativity is defined as the ability to generate a product that is judged to be novel and appropriate (useful or valuable) by a knowledgeable group well placed to judge the creation (Sternberg and Sternberg 2017; Sawyer 2014; Sternberg, Kaufmann and Pretz 2002). If an idea is not accepted or accepted too easily, it is not creative, since 'the only way creativity can be judged is, if over the long run, the creator's work changes how other people think and behave.' (Gardner 2008, p.11). Here, the idea of creativity as a *thing* is foregrounded, because a socially valuable product must be generated for the act or person to be regarded as creative. This is arguably a limited view, as its focus is very much Big C, as discussed in the previous section.

Glaveanu (2010) identifies three paradigms in creativity theory; He, I and We. The 'He' paradigm focusses on the solo or lone 'genius'. Creativity is seen in a rather exclusionist fashion, for the special few. This is reflected in models such as 'Flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; 2002; 1997) to be discussed later. In this paradigm it is 'institutional structures, reflecting power relations between and within social groups' (Glaveanu 2010; p.81) that tends to decide the 'genius' rather than their creativity alone. The 'I' paradigm, essentially replaces the 'genius' with the 'normal' but the focus stays on the individual. Creativity is seen as democratised rather than exclusionist. It focusses on explaining creativity as something that arises from within the psychology of an individual e.g. describing characteristics of creative people (Sternberg and Sternberg 2017). The 'We' paradigm arose from a critique of the individual focus of the He and I paradigms, that separated creativity from its social context. It is concerned with how creative processes operate and are affected by interactions between people. The systems model of Csikszentmihalyi (to be

discussed later) is seen a key part of the We paradigm, as it discusses the relationship between the individual and their social environment.

Four models of creativity, from psychological perspectives, will now be discussed.

### **2.1.2.1 Specific models of creativity**

The four models are: the investment model, propulsion model, systems model and 'flow'. These are not the only models but feature strongly in the psychological literature of creativity.

The investment model of creativity focusses on improving ideas that are seen to be of little value by others. The idea is developed, until it is seen by others to be of value; a "buy low, sell high" approach, hence "investment" (Sternberg 2003). A key feature of investment theory is the focus on the creative person and the characteristics that makes them so. These include: a high motivation and commitment to be creative; non-conformity to norms; self-criticism; careful choice of the focus for creative attention; divergent thinking as a thought process and knowledge and expertise in the focus field (Collins and Amabile 1999; Sternberg and Sternberg 2017).

In contrast, the propulsion model focusses on creative contributions, rather than creative people. The principle is, that creative ideas "propel" a field forward. The propulsion model has a taxonomy of eight types of creative contribution (Sternberg, Kaufmann and Pretz 2002). These include:

- **Redefinition:** a contribution allows the current state of a field to be seen in a new way.



- Redirection: the contribution starts from where the field is but moves in a new direction.
- Interpretation: this uses two or more existing but separate contributions in a field, merged in a new way.

The model's focus on and taxonomy of creative contributions is important for two reasons (Sternberg, Kaufmann and Pretz 2002). Firstly, a contributor may not be limited to one type of contribution. Secondly, it helps to clarify different ways in which creativity can be expressed.

The third model – a systems model - was put forward by Csikszentmihalyi (1999; 2013). This builds from the earlier common definition of creativity that requires judgement and validation of creative ideas or acts. Csikszentmihalyi (2013) is clear; creative ideas disappear without an audience. Without the 'assessment of competent outsiders' (p.6) a claim to creativity cannot be judged as valid. Csikszentmihalyi therefore, proposes a systems model of three necessary parts (1997; 2013). First, is a culture or domain; an area of activity with a clear set of symbolic rules that govern the domain. A domain may be mathematics, music etc. The domain is crucial, as "new" can only be considered in light of what is "old" or existing already (Csikszentmihalyi 1999). Second, is a person who seeks to bring originality to that domain. Third is a field; a group of experts who are equipped to appreciate and validate the work of the individual. They are the 'gatekeepers' of the domain. Without that social valuation, Csikszentmihalyi argues that it would be impossible to distinguish simply bizarre ideas from the genuinely creative (1999). He also argues that 'all three are necessary for a creative idea, product or discovery to take place (Csikszentmihalyi 2013; p.6). In this model, a novelty is deemed creative, if enough of the 'field' see this as valuable and worthy of inclusion in the domain. The focus is

firmly on Big C Creativity that changes a domain. 'Creativity is any act, idea or product that changes an existing domain, that transforms an existing domain into a new one' (Csikszentmihalyi 2013; p.28) and that lasts over time (Csikszentmihalyi 1999). So, true, Big C creativity, in this model can never exist only in the mind of the person. Little c creativity is almost dismissed.

So, like the propulsion model, the focus is on contributions, not the characteristics of the creative person. Those characteristics are not used to define the creativity of a person, only whether their outputs are accepted for inclusion in a domain. To be creative, a person must learn and follow the rules of their focus domain, the criteria for selection into that domain and the preferences of the field (Csikszentmihalyi 2013). It is ironic that the concept of creativity, so often linked to freedom and flexibility, can within this model become so tied up with conformity. However, arguably, we see in this kind of model, creativity being reified, ranked and instrumentalised, as well as becoming potentially the domain of the socially advantaged. Creativity as a concept can thereby be conceptually diminished, because a socially valuable product is foregrounded. The use of this product as the basis for the judgement of creativity does not fully recognise the value of such things as imagination and free thinking, unless they produce a socially judged, and socially valuable.

The fourth model of creativity, 'Flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; 2002; 2013), focusses on the creative person. 'Flow' describes an almost effortless, yet highly focussed, joyful state of consciousness, that characterises the feelings of people engrossed in challenging, creative activity. This state is also described as optimal experience, which requires the ability to control what happens in our consciousness. This is achievable based on our efforts and creativity. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) argues, that

feelings of joy from life depend on how 'the mind filters and interprets everyday experiences' (p.9). Goal driven lives can result in escalating spirals of rising expectation, as each goal is achieved e.g. in career, possessions etc. Pivotal to the idea of flow is the assertion that,

To overcome the anxiety and depressions of contemporary life, individuals must become independent of the social environment, to the degree that they no longer respond exclusively in terms of its rewards and punishments. (Csikszentmihalyi 2002; p.16).

There is a need to find enjoyment and purpose in life irrespective of external pressures or rewards. The psychological elements at play include some key elements. Firstly consciousness. This functions to process and evaluate information from within and outside of our bodies. Secondly, attention or 'psychic energy' (Csikszentmihalyi 2002). This works in our consciousness to select items of information, evaluating them and choosing the best course of action. Thirdly, the self, regarded as existing only in one's own consciousness. The self contains everything that has passed through the consciousness, as well as the goals that have been established. Fourthly, psychic disorder. This affects consciousness adversely when information (e.g. anxiety) conflicts with our goals and diverts attention from their accomplishment; we are no longer free to use that attention in the way that we want to. This can develop into 'psychic entropy, a disorganisation of the self that impairs its effectiveness' (Csikszentmihalyi 2002; p.37). If prolonged, the self is weakened, and goals are not pursued.

'Flow' requires an order in our consciousness. The opposite of psychic entropy is optimal experience. The flow of information into our consciousness is in line with our

goals, so psychic energy (attention) can flow unhindered. Csikszentmihalyi (2013; 2002; 1997) identifies conditions for flow to exist. These include;

- a clarity of goals;
- a knowledge of how well one is doing and the criteria for being judged;
- an avoidance of distractions and intense concentration;
- a gratification that needs no external reward;
- a balance of challenge and skills.

This last point links to the idea of flow activities. These provide a sense of discovery, pushing the individual to greater levels of performance and new states of consciousness. The balance of skill and challenge is crucial. If skill exceeds challenge, boredom is likely. If challenge exceeds skills, then anxiety is likely. Boredom motivates an individual to seek greater challenge; anxiety motivates greater skills development. When the two are balanced, flow ensues and leads to growth in cycles of rising challenge and skills. Neither boredom nor anxiety are pleasant and provide part of the intrinsic motivation – from within – which is generally seen as beneficial to creativity. In flow, motivation is a driving force, but in turn the ‘flow state’ - a highly motivated state of psychological high - is fuelled by the rising challenges and skills development. Motivation is necessary for flow, and flow is motivating (Collins and Amabile 1999). Where motivation is extrinsic – from external sources – the general psychological hypothesis is that this has ‘an undermining effect’ on creativity (Collins and Amabile 1999; p.301). An example would be the effects on creative endeavour of a performance evaluation. However, Collins and Amabile suggest a different perspective arguing that in some case, extrinsic motivation can have the opposite effect. Where the externally driven motivation is about exercising control, the tendency is to suppress creativity. However, where it is

about providing information to facilitate tasks, it can foster creativity, especially in an intrinsically motivated individual.

Flow is optimised when the individual has an 'autotelic' personality (Csikszentmihalyi 2002), one that 'can take potential threats and transform them into enjoyable challenges' (p.209); and a person who has self-contained goals, with none or few of which are imposed by others. Such a person finds enjoyment in life 'even when objective circumstances are brutish and nasty' (p. 212).

Each of these models brings its own perspective on creativity. It is perhaps the systems model and 'flow' that offer the greatest potential for critical discussion when the thesis begins to integrate arguments about creativity in a performative climate, as both deal with creativity in its relationship to its social context and the expectations and judgements that that brings.

To round off this section of psychological perspectives on creativity, attention turns further to sociocultural ideas in psychology and a discussion, albeit relatively briefly on creativity in wider society.

### **2.1.2.2 Creativity and society**

As has been discussed, there are significant models of creativity within psychology that fit the sociocultural 'We' paradigm. This paradigm investigates how social factors influence the creative process and claims a more holistic approach to creativity.

There is a stronger focus on collaboration as creativity is seen as operating in a social context, making it better placed to examine both historical/genius Big C creativity and everyday little c creativity. The We paradigm contextualises creativity and sees more potential to influence creativity as it is seen to be less reliant on individual abilities and characteristics. (Glaveanu 2010).

Glaveanu and Tanggard (2104) bring a pertinent sociocultural perspective to the study of creativity, arguing for the incorporation of a theory of identity. They argue, that identity is relatively ignored in favour of personality traits in creativity research, as identity is seen as less influential. People generally have a view of themselves as regards their creativity. Such beliefs about themselves and their performance are linked as a notion of 'creative self-efficacy ... a person's belief that he or she can be creative in performing a certain task' (Glaveanu and Tanggard 2014; p.13). This is not synonymous with creative identity. Identity can be seen as a set of 'perceived self-meanings' (Burke and Stets 2009; p.62) that develops, as meanings are made within an individual's environment and in relation to others and their representations. These identities can become stable over time, especially where power-based groups or majority views impose their representations.

So, Glaveanu and Tanggard (2014) argue that creative identity develops and emerges in social interaction with others. This process is supported by the various discourses about creativity and therefore the meanings assigned to creativity by the individual and others within their social group. These creative identities can be promoted or denied and Glaveanu and Tanggard suggest that this identity has consequences for an individual's level of engagement in creative acts. This sociocultural perspective of creative identity is crucial within this thesis and will be picked up later in this chapter as notions of identity and agency are developed further.

There are psychological perspectives that go beyond the sociocultural and consider creativity at a societal level. For example, in *"The Courage to Create"* May (1975), argues that we express our *being* by creating. Courage he argues is essential for the creative act in times of great change when we have two choices in how we respond.

On one hand we can respond with anxiety and inactivity because we have lost familiarity. On the other hand, we could be courageous in preserving our 'awareness and responsibility in the face of radical change ...[and] consciously participate, on however small a scale, in the forming of the new society (May 1975, p.12). He argues that in the face of change, if we do not express our original ideas – our creativity – we betray ourselves and fail to make our own contributions to society. Authentic creativity, in the widest sense of promoting social good, lies in the way we respond to the tensions and limits of our lives and situations. Although writing over 40 years ago, when this perspective is applied to the rapidly changing context of education, I would argue that it still has validity. These ideas will be further developed late in this chapter, through the ideas of 'care of the self' (Foucault) and 'the art of living' (Ruti), strengthening the argument of the thesis that courage, identity and agency are crucial in facing the demands and limits of performativity with creative action.

Whilst not discussing creativity explicitly, Fromm, in *"To have or to be"* (1976) make a similar argument, providing further insight into the tensions between the restrictions of performativity and the freedoms of creativity. In this case, freedoms are seen at the largest of scales in terms of implication but starting from us as individuals and transforming institutions and societies.

Fromm (1976) identifies two modes in which people operate; the 'having' mode and the 'being' mode. He argues that normative culture in the Western industrialised world, leads to the having mode being dominant. The culture is one where the goal is "to have" and to have more; if one has nothing, one is nothing. To have *is* to be. In contrast, the being mode is seen as, 'the productive use of our human powers' (p.92) which requires us to let go of the having mode. As normative values tell us that "to

have” is necessary and good, “to be” is therefore a place of anxiety. Applying this to the thesis context of education, Fromm argues that learning in the having mode is about obtaining and holding onto information; students ‘do not have to produce or create something new’ (Fromm, 1976, p.38). By contrast, learners in the being mode are not passive recipients of information and ideas. Their learning is an active process; they challenge and question, and new perspectives are produced as they make sense of others’ ideas in their own minds. As a central point of this thesis, I would argue that the essence of a focus on performativity, to be discussed later, is rooted very much in the ‘having’ mode. Any attempt for teachers to work in a being mode, opens up the potential for anxiety, if their work and ‘performance’ does not conform to the measures of the performative culture.

The field of psychology has much insight to offer, from a focus on individual creative traits, models of creativity, the social influence on the development of creative identities and views of creativity at the level of societal impact. Attention now turns to the field of education and some of its perspectives on creativity.

### **2.1.3 Educational perspectives on creativity**

Over the last 50 years, creativity as a focus for education has grown. Craft (2005, 2014) highlights three identifiable “waves” in the growth of creativity as a focus in primary education in the UK, from the Plowden report of 1967, to the 2000s Government initiatives, driven largely by the perception that creativity has a key role in economic development, therefore is seen as key in educational terms. As this focus has grown, so have definitions of creativity in the field of education. The 1999 National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) heralded a period of policy and initiatives to encourage creative teaching strategies, for example the first major review of the National Curriculum (Department for



Education and Employment, 1999) 'Excellence and Enjoyment' (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and the Roberts report (Roberts, 2006). There was also a Government focus on creativity in education as a necessity for future economic development. Examples of this include the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS 2006) report, 'Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy' and the Department for Education and Skills' (DfES 2006) response to the Roberts review. Craft et al (2014, p.3) refer to this period as 'the creative decade' but argue that this decade 'terminated abruptly' (p.5) with the incoming Conservative/coalition Government's announcement of a National Curriculum review in 2010, which ultimately led to the current National Curriculum (DfE 2013).

In the NACCCE report, creativity is defined as 'imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (NACCCE, 1999, p.29). Four key components are identified;

- Imagination: a fresh perspective that generates alternatives to the routine.
- Purpose: *applied* imagination.
- Originality: seen at three levels.; individual, relative and historic.
- Value: imaginative activity in itself is not creative and can only be called creative if its outcome is deemed to be of value in relation to the task at hand.

In the context of the 'creative decade', value was increasingly being seen as economic value, especially in terms of how creativity and creative acts could be of benefit to the UK economy.

Wyse and Dowson (2009 p.5) take this further in that outcomes must be judged as valuable by those 'appropriately qualified to make that judgement'; similar to the ideas in Csikszentmihalyi's systems model. In contrast, Fisher and Williams (2004),

define creativity as when outcomes are generated that show imagination and originality, as well as value, but the creative thinker can judge the value of what they have done. In discussing creative dialogue in school, Fisher (2013) sees imagination as ‘the mind’s plastic material, enabling us to conceive of things that are beyond senses’ (p.5) but argues that it lies dormant unless expressed and practised through creative activity, including thought and dialogue. Starko (2014) points to Vygotsky’s view that creative imagination has its origins in children’s play. There is a distinction here between reproductive imagination and combinatory imagination. In the former, a child imagines things drawn from their memory. In the latter, the child brings together things from previous experiences into new situations. It is these new created situations that characterise creativity.

Starko (2014) also identifies two key elements across a range of definitions of creativity – novelty and appropriateness. For Starko, novelty involves asking the key question ‘new to whom?’. Writing in the school classroom context, he states (2014, p.12), that ‘to be considered creative, a product or idea must be original or novel to the individual creator.’ Craft (2005) and NACCCE (1999) discuss the ideas of ‘Big C’ and ‘Little c’ creativity. This can be seen as an interpretation of Boden’s (2004) distinction between historical creativity and psychological creativity. Put simply, Big C may be Mozart where creativity is part of and expressed through a “genius” level of talent and the originality may be on the “historical level” (NACCCE, 1999). Little c is much smaller scale and every day e.g. the role play of a nursery child. The point here is while there may be differences in scale, these are *not* differences in value, which puts this view, common, but not universal in the education field, at odds with more prevalent views from psychology (e.g. Gardner, 2008). Hawkins (2017), in this context, questions whether creativity is seen as a personal or social phenomenon;

does creativity produce something original and of value to the creator or is that originality and value socially determined and at a larger, more societal scale?

Perspectives of creativity in the education field however, go beyond just attempting to define creativity as a concept. Creativity in education is often seen as comprising of creative teaching, teaching for creativity and creative learning (NACCCE, 1999; Craft 2005; Wyse and Dowson 2009). To summarise, creative teaching is where teachers bring their own creativity to bear to make lessons more interesting and engaging. Teaching for creativity is seen as forms of teaching that are intended to develop learners' own creative thinking or behaviour. The third element, creative learning, is more complex. Craft (2005) sees creative learning as involving learners in using imagination and experience to develop their learning, to collaborate over tasks and make contributions to classroom pedagogy and curriculum. This can be seen as imaginative achievement which is evidenced in the creation of new knowledge (Burnard, Craft and Cremin, 2008). The phrase "new knowledge" is significant and supported by Spendlove and Wyse (in Burnard, Craft and Cremin, 2008), who cite Guilford's (1950) assertion, that a creative act is an instance of learning. It could also be argued, reciprocally, that any instance of learning is also a creative act, in that learning always involves something new for the learner. Burnard, Craft and Cremin (2008) also argue that in the idea of creative learning, 'where learning is understood as construction of meaning, the distinctions between creativity and learning are fine' (xxi). There are clear links here to the Vygotskian view of socially constructed learning (developed further in chapter 3) and a deeper view of creativity and learning that are inextricably linked. These ideas were developed further, through research into what characterises pedagogy for creativity in schools (Craft et al, 2014). From this research, three core characteristics emerged in relation to pedagogy for creativity; first was co-construction between and with children;

second was a high value placed on children's agency, ownership and control of their learning; third was a high expectation in children knowing how to engage creatively, as evidenced through the arts, flexible time usage, and the use of integrated topics and themes. Creativity is seen, therefore, as an important element to expect from and develop in teachers and pupils.

There is also a wealth of practice-based literature on how creativity can be promoted through the curriculum, often in the vein of creativity in/through subjects and/or phases of the primary curriculum (Wilson 2007; Fisher and Williams 2004; Wyse and Dowson 2009; Jones and Wyse 2013). Whilst it is important to recognise that there is a significant quantity of writing in this vein in the education field, in not engaging with these writings, I am making no comment other than to state that this level of classroom practice is not the focus of this thesis.

So, we can see, even from a brief overview of a small selection of perspectives, that creativity is viewed in different and contrasting ways. However, a common thread running through these ideas, even though they come from different fields, is the notion that creativity as a concept can be objectified as something to be attained and judged. Whilst creativity as a word, is technically a noun and therefore an object, I would argue that to view creativity solely on this basis is to miss much of its richness, depth and life-enhancing potential. Creativity as a concept can be productively viewed more as a verb than as a noun; it is something which we are and live rather than something which should be objectified. This will be explored through the case studies (chapters 4, 5 and 6) as the importance of agency and identity is discussed.

Some of the Government papers of 'the creative decade' discussed in section 2.1.2 highlighted the view of wider economic implications of developing creativity. Fisher and Williams (2004, p.11) summarise this view:

The message of creativity is: the world as it is presented to us is not the only possible world ... The focus of education must be on creating people who are capable of thinking and doing new things, not simply repeating what past generations have done.

Attention now turns to a discussion of performativity. The argument will develop, that performativity presents one of the key forces that challenges teachers' identities and their freedoms to practice creatively.

## **2.2 Performativity**

This section begins by considering what the term performativity means, especially in an educational context and discussing how and why tensions may arise between creativity and performativity.

Performativity, in the educational context, is a technology, a culture or a mode of regulation that uses judgements and comparisons based on set criteria as a means of incentive, control and change. A performative culture has the potential to focus organisations and individuals onto a narrow set of measures and accountabilities, to the detriment of, in the argument of this thesis, a focus on developing creativity in teaching and learning. Rewards and sanctions may be used that may be material and/or symbolic and the performance, of an individual or organisation, provides a measure of productivity, output, quality and success (Ball, 2003). This can lead to a focus, on the part of educators, on those things that drive or 'feed' a performative culture, rather than on what may be seen as deeper, but less tangible areas, such as creativity.

In the context of education, there is little doubt that the UK is in a period of significant change; Clarke and Moore (2013; p.230) refer to an 'epidemic of reforms' and Ball (2003, p.145) calls the scope and complexity of reforms 'breath-taking', which in schools have seen a shift towards the 'logic of performativity' (Flint and Peim 2012; p.155). The 'logic' of performativity lies in the neoliberal logic of competition between and autonomy for schools (Clarke and Moore 2013). This logic can be seen in the 1988 Education Reform Act which established or led to the establishment of several key policy changes. For example, the National Curriculum for schools in England and Wales was established for the first time. This set up a standardised curriculum and statutory assessment of its core subjects, putting test data within the public domain. The 1988 ERA also led to the establishment of Ofsted and an inspection regime which remains to this day, the judgements of which, like the statutory assessment data, continue to be fully in the public domain. The essence of the 1988 ERA was summarised by the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker to as freedom, choice, standards and quality control (Hansard 1987). Freedom and choice for parents was to choose schools for their children, based on publicly available information about schools' performance, supported by a system of quality control to ensure the consistency of judgements about standards. Subsequent reforms were driven by notions of marketisation, competition, choice and accountability (Clarke, 2013b). In the context of this thesis, examples include the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012) the achievement of which determines the award of QTS and recent Government proposals for a core content framework for Initial Teacher Training (DfE, 2016).

In such things as the centralised specification of curricula and standards, the growth of performance management, inspections and the high stakes use of assessment information (Alexander 2009) there is strong evidence of the assumption that quality,

excellence and standards are quantifiable. That becomes the focus for governments and through the application of performative measures, that becomes in turn the focus of school leaders, teachers and teacher educators.

These ideas reflect two key concepts; reification and ranking (Gould 1981).

Reification speaks of the tendency of people to convert abstract concepts into things, for example, converting the complexities of being an effective teacher into a single set of teachers' standards (e.g., DfE 2012). This then links directly into a second concept; ranking. This is essentially the ordering of complex variations for example as ascending or descending scales. To do this requires a measure and to do that requires that concepts are reified.

So, returning to the Teachers' Standards, when applied to student teachers in ITE, they allow students to be graded and ranked, and in turn form part of the data set that is used for Ofsted's inspection and grading of ITE providers. Foucault (1994; 2002) developed his notion of Governmentality (to which we will return later in this chapter) as the way in which control is exercised by the state over its populace.

People are taught to govern themselves, behaviour being shaped by the exercise of power through performative measures and the value attributed to them. The value may first be attributed by governments and then, through the logic of performativity, the value can be taken on by, for example school leaders, teachers and teacher educators.

This thesis challenges a powerful, normative view that aspects of human being or human capacity can be abstracted into concrete "things", measured and ranked and that ranking is used for social, political and educational purposes. The apparent scientific objectivity (or the logic of performativity) endows these processes with a status and "truth" that this thesis does not accept.

In a similar fashion, Ball (2003) rejects the assumption that quality, excellence and standards can be quantifiable. Whilst there may be value in such expressions of quality and standards, they are reductionist, simplifying complexities and ignore personal, emotional and political dimensions (Clarke 2013b). These reforms have three interrelated policy technologies; the market, managerialism and performativity. The market, places schools in competition with each other and is therefore seen as a driver for improvement. Managerialism places the gathering of information, targets, judgements, monitoring and comparisons by managers above the professional judgement of teachers. Performativity becomes an accountability regime that uses these judgements and comparisons as 'means of control, attrition and change' (Ball and Olmedo 2013, p.57).

The effects of market, managerialism and performativity in schools can include increased intensification of work, social relationship that become more competitive and increased paperwork to meet the needs of accountability structures. There can be a growing gap between the values, purpose and perspectives of senior staff (focussed on performance, outcomes etc.) and teaching staff (focussed on curriculum, pupil needs and the classroom). A culture of performativity can then be seen to represent the worth, quality and value of an individual or institution and that worth will be judged by someone. The 'what' and 'how' of those judgements will be set out for example in terms of criteria, targets and standards.

Performativity therefore has the capacity to shape both what we do, but also who we are and the capacity to reshape the organisations or individuals that are being monitored (Ball 2003; 2013). In this sense, performativity can be a culture of 'terror' (Lyotard 1984; Ball 2003; 2013); a threat to remove an individual or institution from participation in a field resulting from inadequate performance in relation to the criteria



that set out the standards in that field. Teachers are thus ‘constituted as both experts and subservient, as professional and compliant’ (Honan, 2015, p. 216). This idea will now be explored more fully.

### **2.2.1 Terror and Soul**

When the focus on managerial accountability measures is disproportionate, Ball (2003) describes this as the terrors of performativity, as opposed to the teacher’s soul. The teachers’ agendas are dominated by performative measures, targets and scrutiny, to the detriment of their professional autonomy, identity and the energies, enthusiasm and pleasures of teaching – their professional “souls”. These accountability systems

Leave the relationship between students and teachers undernourished because the teacher’s responsibility to government is prioritised through audit, taking precedence over her responsibility to the learner (Pinto 2016: p.92)

The level of conformity to these performative measures, targets and criteria can be driven, for example, by rewards and sanctions. However, such is the power of the expectation to conform, either by reward or sanction, that it can be seen as unthinkable to do anything other than conform. In that sense, Lyotard (1984), argues that any significant ‘moves’ contrary to this performative orthodoxy are denied or repressed because they challenge the accepted position too radically. The stronger that move is, the more likely that it is to be denied any consensus, ‘because it changes the rules of the game upon which consensus has been based’. Referring to such denial or suppression of non-conformity Lyotard asserts that ‘such behaviour is terrorist’ (p.63). The terror of performativity in any field therefore says, change your practices, aspirations and beliefs to our ends – or else (Lyotard 1984).

Courtney and Gunter's (2015) research suggested that the state mandated removal of teachers, based on dissent or failure to measure up to what is meant by good (or better), was becoming normalised. They describe this as a 'total terror' (p.413). They argue that disposal of teachers is a societally accepted and promoted goal within educational organisations, as in business, in the pursuit of what is seen as 'good'.

There is a paradox in the culture of performativity; the targets, standards, measures etc. can become so institutionalised that they become the norms of belief and actions and so become powerful drivers of practice. Such actions can become disproportionately focussed on those managerial measures, rather than on what otherwise may have been the focus of professionals, based on their judgements. Individuals and institutions can become convinced that their actions are all about improvement, whereas they are focussed on a potentially arbitrary set of criteria, imposed from without. A culture of performativity can change what people do and who they are (Ball 2013) and the effects of neoliberal education reforms have had 'visceral-and eviscerating effects ... on the professional identities of teachers (Clarke 2013b; p.230). The neoliberal technologies of a performative culture are convincing and so take over teachers. Moore (2018) suggests that neoliberalism has become the dominant political ideology in the UK, which 'presents itself as a rational choice' (p.98). So, there is a paradox of resistance and capitulation (Ball 2006; Clarke 2013b); teachers simultaneously submit to rigorous structures and demands of performativity whilst showing resistance to the pressures of the associated direct surveillance. In this sense, Clarke (2013a) sees the drive for accountability, as having led to 'a diminishment of teacher individuality' (p.165) and that approaching teaching from the perspective of identity, offers a fuller picture of teachers and teaching than a standards-based model.

There are clear tensions between a desire for teachers to work with creative freedom and the powerful and pervasive logic of performativity, that has come to dominate school and initial teacher education. A key question here is; if teachers and student teachers are being subjected to ‘terror,’ and their ‘souls’ are being eroded, how might they try escape such pressures and still be able to teach young children? To begin to address that question in depth, attention now turns to the theorising of the human subject.

### **2.3 Theorising of the human subject**

In discussing theories of creativity and the challenges and tensions of performativity, the human subject and how we can see ourselves, or can be formed by others’ perspectives and actions, have been discussed. However, these notions of the human subject warrant further exploration through the ideas of some key thinkers. The following sections explore three themes that add to the discussions of these challenges and tensions. Through these discussions, the argument will build that the development of a strong sense of identity and agency, is an effective counterpoint to the pressures and negative impacts on creativity of a performative culture in education. The first theme is, ‘normalisation, reproduction, appropriation’. This theme, with a focus on Bourdieu’s ideas of habitus and forms of capital, discusses an explanatory framework of how human thought and activity can be controlled and perpetuated. This is pertinent in the context of the normalising effects of performativity already discussed. The second theme is ‘power, discipline, subjectivity and self-formation’ with a focus on Foucault. This theme is relevant because it discusses the role of power in the shaping of human thought and activity. It goes on to offer insight into how we can engage in self-formation, developing an identity and agency that opens up the possibilities to escape the performative ‘habitus’. The third

theme is ‘agentification and creativity’, with a focus on the psychoanalytical work of Lacan and Ruti’s interpretations of Lacan’s work. This theme is important, as it offers the most agentic perspective of the three and allows the theoretical framework to return full circle to notions of creativity.

In the vast field of the human subject these three focus areas are by no means exhaustive. Nonetheless, together, they provide a helpful scheme to underpin the research.

### **2.3.1 Theoretical theme 1: Normalisation, reproduction, appropriation**

This section begins with a discussion of one of Bourdieu’s key ideas, habitus. This is pertinent in the context of this study because it seeks to explain how thoughts, beliefs, actions etc. can be and are appropriated and reproduced in social groups. In the context of creativity, habitus can be seen to be something of an anti-creative concept, where originality, imagination, freedom and choice for example, are not strong features.

#### **2.3.1.1 Habitus**

Bourdieu’s idea of habitus is used to mean the knowledge about ways of doing things and responding to situations which we routinely, but not consciously, employ (Jones and Bradbury 2018). It is an acquired way of seeing the world, which reflects shared and common understandings within a social group. This is based on deeply rooted assumptions, not explicitly reflected upon, but held almost subconsciously and which we all inherit (Green 2013). These assumptions regulate both our individual and collective practices and therefore the habitus influences practice, to a greater or lesser extent. In this way, the habitus is the basis for apprehending practice, as the collective experiences of the group produces an alignment to what is

expected of its members. So how is a habitus formed? Bourdieu (1991, p.51)

asserts that,

There is every reason to think that the factors which are most influential in the formation of the habitus are transmitted without passing through language and consciousness, but through suggestions inscribed in the most apparently insignificant aspects of the things, situations and practices of everyday life.

This introduces the idea of dispositions - things from the past, which survive in the present and also perpetuate themselves into the future (Bourdieu 1977), through which the choices of the habitus are accomplished. The habitus is the principle by which judgements and practice are socially generated and classified, allowing the represented social world of the habitus to be constituted (Bourdieu 1984). The habitus is then internalised and 'converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning giving perceptions' (Bourdieu 1984, p.166). So, the habitus can impose particular practices and meaning which regulate social groups, institutions, even whole societies. As Jarvis (2009; p.28) argues, 'there is a sense in which we might unknowingly be imprisoned behind the bars of our own minds'.

Another key feature of the habitus is the way in which it is self-perpetuating and self-regulating, without any clear rules or conscious goals; 'structured structures, predisposed to function as structuring structures' (Bourdieu; 1977; p.72). So, the habitus is a very structured entity, which also structures the habitus and its self-perpetuation. The habitus is a system of practices that are classified as "belonging" and the system by which the practices are classified; an internal logic or self-justification. The habitus becomes natural, unchallenged and normal for those within it and whose interests it serves (Bourdieu, 1984). This is 'collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor' (Bourdieu 1977,

p.72). So, the habitus is a structured and structuring structure, built on collective and largely unchallenged normative assumptions; it generates and structures practices and beliefs and these are regulated without the need for explicit rules. Whilst the operation of the habitus is subconsciously 'orchestrated', its operation is nonetheless (or maybe, more so) powerful.

The idea of habitus can be reflected upon with two contrasting viewpoints (Inglis and Thorpe, 2012). On the one hand, habitus is ultimately deterministic, in that practices created by the socialisation remain fixed and unchangeable; we are pre-programmed to operate in the way that a habitus demands of us. On the other hand, the way in which a habitus responds to its contexts, depends on the specific circumstances of competition within those contexts. As these change, the habitus requires creative response on the behalf of its individuals. So, whilst the habitus can be seen to constrain thoughts and actions, it does not necessarily determine them. Whether seen as deterministic or just influential, the idea presents a potentially bleak outlook; how can change ever come about? This will be addressed, later in this chapter, as other perspectives are discussed.

The habitus tends to produce people with predispositions, which in turn, tend to produce practices that fit in with the structures of which they are part, 'and therefore contributing to the reproduction of the structures' (Bourdieu, 2006; p.258). This reproduction of structures, Bourdieu sees as closely tied to the reproduction of the distribution of different forms of capital among different classes. It is to these forms of capital that we now turn our attention. When these forms of capital are seen in the context of things such as QTS and gradings of teachers against standards, then the role of a habitus in potentially suppressing creative originality and freedom becomes clearer and more pertinent in our contemporary, performative educational climate.

### 2.3.1.2 Forms of capital

Three forms of capital are identified; economic, cultural and social (Bourdieu 2011). Economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into money. Cultural capital may be convertible into economic capital under some circumstances and may be institutionalised e.g. in the form of educational qualifications. Social capital involves such things as connections and networks; it may be convertible into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the form of titles of nobility. All forms of capital are seen as reproducible and conversions can take place between the different forms. For example, economic capital can be converted into the institutionalised form of cultural capital, that is a degree qualification. What is seen as crucial, is that the structures of the (unequal) distribution of forms of capital tend to reproduce themselves, perpetuating the structures and the associated inequalities (Bourdieu, 2006); this is part and parcel of the self-perpetuation and reproduction of the habitus discussed earlier.

Delving more deeply into cultural and social reproduction in the context of the education system, Bourdieu (2006) states that classical theories traditionally define the education system as the group of institutions which transmit information from generation to generation. Where education and society are very qualification and performance focussed, the education system 'fulfils a function of the legitimisation ... and reproduction of the social order' (Bourdieu, 2006; p.271). Bourdieu argues that the ability to appropriate cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications, depends upon the prior possession of the means by which the cultural capital is appropriated. This may include the possession of other forms of cultural capital as well as social and economic capital. As an example, in England there is a large attainment gap (measured in qualifications) between those pupils who are

persistently disadvantaged and their peers (Andrews, Robinson and Hutchinson 2017). So, those pupils who have a lesser, prior possession of social, cultural and economic capital, have a lesser access to the cultural capital of the education system in the form of qualifications, which lessens their access to future forms of capital. Hence there is a reproduction, through the education system, which will also reproduce the associated and inherent social inequalities, unless the means to be successful within the system are equally available to all.

The notion of habitus has been critiqued in relation to its adequacy for addressing the complexities of social structures. The strong focus on the control of dispositions within social structures, can be seen as 'downgrading the capacity of individuals to negotiate or transform existing social systems through own creative actions' (Elliott and Lemert 2014; p.226). Whilst Bourdieu does describe habitus as a social structure which is internalised by individuals, it is not always seen as that which simply reproduces social conformity. It can shape our orientations, but not as an objective law, and there remains an agentic potential (Jones and Bradbury 2018). The habitus can be seen as both forcing and enabling the development of identity and agency amongst its members. If it is regarded too deterministically, habitus neglects the creativity of action which individuals can exercise (Elliott and Lemert 2014). Whilst our habitus may be influential, it is not the totality of our selves (Alheit, 2009); the concept does not engage fully in how social structures can be changed (Elliott and Lemert, 2014). In other words, Elliott and Lemert argue that habitus may not be so 'overwhelmingly rigid' (p.228) and there can be a 'sense of the potential malleability of habitus' (Rawolle and Lingard, 2013: p.22).

So, we have the notion of habitus, a self-perpetuating, structuring structure and forms of capital, the unequal distribution of which is reproduced within our education



systems. We turn now to a third group of Bourdieu's ideas, cultural arbitraries, inculcation and symbolic violence. Together, these give further insight into how a performative culture can influence and control thoughts and actions.

### **2.3.1.3 Cultural arbitraries, inculcation and symbolic violence**

Bourdieu (1990), argues that every institutionalised education system owes the reproductive nature of its structure and functioning to the fact that these are

necessary both to the exercise of its essential function of inculcation and to the fulfilment of its function of reproducing a cultural arbitrary which it does not produce. (Bourdieu, 1990; p.54).

A cultural arbitrary, is something held in esteem and the acquirement of which requires a conforming to a set of criteria. These criteria are somewhat arbitrary, in that they could be conceived as being in a different form, but are, nonetheless, generally regarded as being of worth. In the context of this study, the award of Qualified Teachers Status (QTS) based on the demonstration by student teachers that they have met the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012), is a good example of a cultural arbitrary; they are arbitrary in the sense that there could be different standards, expressed differently. In this specific context, 'inculcation' can be seen to be into the profession of teaching and the access to that profession in this country, is only by the award of QTS. So, in the the context of ITE, the cultural arbitray of these nationally determined and applied standards, is a powerful driving force behind the content and pedagogy of ITE courses.

Symbolic violence can be seen in the ways in which practitioners are potentially required to align with a particular viewpoint or practice, irrespective of their own beliefs and understandings. The symbolic violence becomes part of the reproduction, is likened to a form of constraint and is used as a sanction for the

failure to internalise and conform to a normative assumption – the cultural arbitrary. Symbolic violence therefore is seen as ‘the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power’ (1990, p.5).

So, applying this to the thesis’ context, ITE does not produce the cultural arbitrary of the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2012). However, I would argue, they have become so much a part of its ‘essential function of inculcation’ (Bourdieu, 1990; p,54) in order for students to gain QTS and become of the teaching profession, that the cultural arbitrary is constantly reproduced. As such they have become part of the habitus of ITE that act as both powerful drivers of practice and the criteria for the judgements, targets and surveillance of performativity. Within this, there is the tension that courses in ITE are explicitly and/or implicitly using symbolic violence; the Teachers Standards and the award of QTS, hang over those student teachers, as the proverbial “Sword of Damocles”. As course tutors, we are effectively saying, “achieve these standards (the cultural arbitrary) or you cannot join our club of qualified teachers; conform or there are consequences” and therein lies the symbolic violence. There are clear performative consequences of *not* conforming. However, as will be argued, there are consequences of conforming; the potential suppression of creativity in teaching and learning.

The ideas discussed here, contribute to the understanding of performativity. The idea of habitus, as that often unchallenged, structuring structure that can play a significant role in forming thoughts and actions; the forms of capital and the cultural arbitraries that so often form the standards by which the capital is attained; the symbolic violence that can surround the inculcation into a habitus and that attainment of the forms of capital. All of these can be seen operating within the, often unchallenged, performative culture of many contemporary education systems. In these contexts, to

*not* conform to the logic of performativity, is often seen as unthinkable or is the catalyst for symbolic violence, for example, in the form of a requirement to work in a way that prioritises the very measure of performativity. The reality and addressing of these tensions will be discussed more fully in the analytical chapters 4, 5 and 6.

This leads now onto the second of three theoretical themes, which offers greater scope for and a more optimistic perspective on our agency, drawing primarily on the work of Foucault. There is a greater consideration of self-formation and the development of identity and agency. The scope for, and importance of, challenging the influence of established ideas and practice in our lives is foregrounded, through exploring ideas about power, discipline, subjectivity and ‘care of the self.’

### **2.3.2 Theoretical theme 2: Power, discipline, subjectivity and self-formation**

This theme will be foregrounded by a discussion of some of the ideas of Foucault.

These ideas will initially provide further insight into the ways in which performativity can exercise some degree of control over thoughts and actions of individuals and organisations. Foucault’s later ideas around self-formation, will begin to develop a more agentic perspective. This will begin to provide insight into how one may escape the potential constraints of habitus, power and discipline, as may be experienced in a performative culture. To that end, the first area to be discussed within this theme, is power and discipline.

#### **2.3.2.1 Power and Discipline**

A central element (discussed earlier in this chapter) of Ball’s concerns about performativity and Bourdieu’s concerns about the ability of a habitus to structure and

reproduce beliefs and actions, is power; what it is, where it lies and for what purposes it is used. In *"Discipline and Punish"*, Foucault (1979) develops the idea of control; discipline, rather than punishment, producing what are termed docile bodies, passively accepting the limits placed on their freedom. He identifies three ways in which the 'means of correct training' (1979, p.172) are effected in society. The first is through hierarchical observations; 'internal, articulated and detailed controls' (p.172). Control is exercised, as those being observed, internalise the expectations in the criteria for a satisfactory outcome of the observations. The second element is the use of normalising judgements, which bring with them the notion of non-conforming; 'that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it' (Foucault, 1979; p.178). These normalising judgments are used to rank and grade people, according to the conformity to the norm. In turn, this rewards and punishes through attainment of a higher place in the group, or not, respectively. The conformity to the imposed cultural arbitrary, indicates membership of and allows hierarchisation of individuals, within a homogeneous social body. This, potentially, has a strong influence on a person's sense of identity and agency. The third element of 'correct training' is the examination, which combines an observing hierarchy and normalising judgements. Foucault describes the examination as 'a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish' (1979, p.184). In this, there is a shift from a traditional view and exercise of power which was very visible and typically punitive. Disciplinary power is seen to be exercised through its *invisibility*, but simultaneously imposing on those whom it seeks to control, a principle and expectation of compulsory *visibility*.

Foucault develops the notion of visibility in the idea of panopticism (Foucault, 1979; 1980). Panopticism draws on Bentham's panopticon - a prison design. The basic design was a circular building with a central, internal tower, with windows onto the

inside of the ring. The ring would be divided into cells, with windows into the centre and onto the outside of the building. So, with a supervisor in the central tower, but not seen from the cells and the occupants of the cells constantly visible, there is reversal of the dungeon prison model, which enclosed and shut prisoners away from sight. In the outer ring, people are totally seen without ever seeing and in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen – the two groups within the panopticon are in opposite situations. Power is seen as both a form of discipline, but also used for training and the imposition of particular forms of behaviour. In the panopticon schema, i.e. the idea applied widely and not necessarily literally, fewer people can exercise power on more people and interventions can be made at any time. This hegemonic power and the constant pressure of surveillance can act even before “crimes” (any non-conforming to the normalising judgements) have been committed. Foucault sees the schema as transferable and able to be integrated into any function, where it can increase the effect of the function and can subtly place power within the function.

It is not difficult to identify pertinent performative contexts in which elements of the panoptic schema can be seen. The current system of Ofsted inspections of both schools and ITE in England is one such example. The constant visibility and surveillance of the school/university is there, in the data available at distance to Ofsted. The school/university has little idea of whether this is taking place at any time. My long experience of ITE and schools (thirteen Ofsted inspections in total since 1996) shows that the behaviour of these organisations is moulded by that exercise of power. Ultimately, through inspection, hierarchical observations and normalising judgements are made and the exercise of power reaches a climax in an inspection and Ofsted’s grading of the institution. Undoubtedly this can punish and reward. The way that schools and ITE providers respond, as those in the outer ring

of the panopticon, shows how the schema can exercise power, to train those people into forms of behaviour; the terrors of performativity, habitus and the panopticon schema all come together.

We turn now to a consideration of the relationships between power and knowledge, making links between the writing of Foucault and Lyotard

### **2.3.2.2 Power and knowledge**

Power, for Foucault, is more complicated than a set of laws or an apparatus of state. Foucault (1980a; 1980b; 2002) sees a close relationship between power and knowledge; the exercise of power causes new objects of knowledge to emerge, creating new bodies of information and at the same time, but conversely, knowledge induces the effects of power. They are as Foucault sees it 'the articulation of each on the other' (1980b, p.51). Lyotard (1984) in his 'Report on Knowledge', analyses the controls placed on knowledge and power by governments, corporations and the international markets. He argues, as a starting point, that the status of knowledge altered as societies entered the post-industrial or post-modern age; knowledge became 'exteriorised' and become a commodity to be bought and sold (Malpass 2003). Knowledge is therefore seen as having become the basis of power, as the most powerful nations have the best knowledge resources and also the greatest ability to collect knowledge on other nations. This shift can be seen, for example, in the competition between education systems and educational institutions e.g. international league tables (OECD) and national school league tables. The publication of these tables in England is often accompanied by headlines about lagging behind competitors: 'PISA tests: UK lags behind in global school ranking' (BBC News 2016).

This in turn has been seen to fuel calls for approaches to teaching that reflect those of the highest PISA ranking countries (BBC News 2017).

Lyotard is clear in his view, that education is affected significantly by the predominance of the performativity agenda. If knowledge is increasingly seen as a commodity to be bought and sold, then the performativity agenda will lead education policy increasingly towards economic goals and to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding most needed by the world. He sees higher education, for example, tending towards the function of professional training. Therefore, the question asked by the professionalist student (e.g. in ITE) is no longer “is it true?” but “what use is this?” which approximates to “is it saleable?”; in terms of Bourdieu’s discussion of forms of capital, “is it exchangeable for economic capital?” Linking this back to ideas of habitus, power, symbolic violence and performativity, the commoditisation of knowledge ties these ideas together, in the context of the professionalist student and in this case, those pursuing QTS. They want and pay for the knowledge that will gain them QTS. In order to get that, they have to conform to the requirements of the Teachers’ Standards. ITE providers hold the power over these students in the reward (or sanction) of them gaining (or not) QTS. Central government holds the power over ITE providers in the award (or sanction) of a positive (or negative) Ofsted grading which fundamentally affects the allocation of future student places and the economic viability of that ITE provider. The perceived quality and success of the teaching workforce, in turn, is reflected in and judged by institutional, national and international comparisons. The result is a multi-layered system of power relationships, surveillance and exchanges of forms of capital, driven by a performative agenda. This, in turn, is driven by a government agenda based on economic success. This leads to a situation where education policy is ‘increasingly

subordinated to and articulated in terms of economic policy and the necessities of international competition' (Ball and Olmedo 2013; p.61).

Foucault goes beyond a focus simply on how power functions in relation to powerful individuals and repressive institutions, to focus on how power is exercised within a social body rather than from above it. He develops the notion of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 2002) as the way in which the state exercises control over its populace.

Foucault also sees this as the way in which people are taught to govern themselves. In this, there is a shifting of power from a central authority, like a state or institution, and dispersing it among a population. Governmentality can therefore be understood, as how conduct is shaped, making the exercise of power and control more of an internalised experience. So, Foucault returns to panopticism to an extent, in seeing that governmentality allows for the creation of 'docile bodies' (1979, p.172) to be used for economically and politically useful ends.

In these discussions, there is still an element of pessimism (as with Bourdieu and habitus), in terms of a person's ability or agency to escape the constraints of our social worlds. Foucault's earlier work on discipline may be seen as nihilist and deterministic to an extent (McNay 1994), but, if there are such powerful internal and external forces at work to regulate and normalise our thoughts and practices, how can we develop a strong sense of identity and agency that can challenge these forces? Foucault's later works are seen as an attempt to overcome some of this determinism, allowing power to be seen as less stable and less influential, opening up possibilities of stronger self-formation (Mills 2003; McNay 1994) and it is to this that we now turn.



### 2.3.2.3 Subjectivity and self-formation

In the area of subjectivity and the formation of the self, Foucault (1986) discusses the idea of 'care of the self'. This is about practices that aim for self-improvement in relation to an ethical way of life. The 'winning' of an ethos is seen as an exit from that which is produced by a focus on surveillance (Vintges 2014). Such freedom is seen by Foucault, as being brought about by speaking the truth; this may require significant courage but is nonetheless vital to sustaining one's integrity.

For Foucault, freedom is a creative force, resulting from not submitting to an external power, but generating a power that is expressed over oneself. 'Care of the self' is used to describe and analyse subjectivity, subjectivity in Foucault's view being 'what we do when we set out to do the hard work of forging a relationship to ourselves' (McGushin, 2014; p.129). A focus on disciplinary training, and normalisation towards fixed perceptions of what we should be, is likely to cause us to miss the *becoming* that is central to 'care of the self'. Therefore, any notion of finding oneself in that way, is futile. Foucault talks about being true to oneself – the winning of an ethos discussed earlier. This speaks of a relationship of the self, to itself. So, when one expresses oneself, one is simultaneously the expresser (or expressive agent) and the self that is being expressed (the object); the self is both active agent and passive object. Subjectivity is therefore dynamic and active; a constant and organised working on the self (Ball and Olmedo, 2012). A key element of Foucault's idea is that if we lose sight of this activity, we can tend to accept a fixed idea of who and what we are. If we do this, we tend to neglect the development of the active relationship which is at the heart of subjectivity (McGushin, 2014).

Foucault identifies two forms of subjectivity – disciplinary and hermeneutic.

Disciplinary subjectivity is one which monitors, records and regulates behaviour, to

allow comparisons one to another. It leads to a normalisation of thinking and activity but is one that makes us productive and raise capacities; as such it is hard to resist and seems to be positive force. However, as it is externally driven, we are shaped and ideas about who we are and how we do things, are formed; but the question remains – is it who we are? Hermeneutic subjectivity, on the other hand, involves looking within for the true self that has not been moulded and made to conform – a subjectivity of self-expression. However, Foucault rejects both, as they both miss the relational activity that make us the kind of person that we are. In response to this rejection Foucault proposes an alternative way of thinking about ourselves; subjectivity is not something that we are, but is an activity that we do (McGushin, 2014). For Foucault, subjectivity is an active *becoming* rather than a fixed being. So, the quest to find oneself causes us to neglect our subjective becoming. In this case, then disciplinary training and normalisation take over. If we do not engage in this active becoming, there is the risk of ‘ontological insecurity’ (Ball, 2003, p.148); are we doing enough, the right things, doing as much or as well as others? There is an additional uncertainty; are we doing what we do because it is worthwhile, or because it will be measure, judged and compared? The insecurity is compounded if the stage is reached, when we cannot recognise our ability and our achievements in the face of indicators that suggest otherwise. Performance indicators provide the basis for measurement and comparison and, hence, can give feelings of pride, success, failure, guilt, shame etc. They simultaneously have emotional status and the appearance of rationality and objectivity; the terrors of performativity, discussed earlier, lie in *not* conforming to the apparent rationality and falling short of those imposed standards, measures and targets. Within the context of earlier discussions about performativity, power, habitus, freedom and the normalising impacts on thoughts and actions, then ‘care of the self’, the careful, conscious activity of

subjectivity and the resultant emerging identity are, arguably, the primary guards against such normalisation.

Foucault's 'care of the self' is also the practice of intellectual freedom and this is the process of problematising and questioning the forces that shape our subjectivity (Clarke, 2013b). So, fearless speech and the care of the self go hand in hand (Mendieta, 2014). The ideas of fearless speech and intellectual freedom as a practice of self-formation are also developed by Said (1993; 1996) and Gramsci (1971).

### **2.3.2.4 Intellectual freedom and self-formation**

Said (1996) discusses 'the intellectual' as being one who has a faculty for representing, articulating and living a message or opinion to and for a public audience. Far from being detached, the role has an edge that is to publicly raise questions and challenge orthodoxy rather than produce it. The intellectual's role needs commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability as they speak for their beliefs. Intellectuals operate within their contexts and resist these by disrupting official narratives and justifications of power. In doing so, the intellectual develops new perspectives 'in which to the best of one's ability, the intellectual tries to tell the truth' (p.16) with a willingness not to let normative assumptions guide their life. Gramsci (1971) argues that 'all men [people] are intellectuals' (p.9) and all people engage in some form of intellectual activity, bringing in new modes of thought. So, like Said, Gramsci sees a role for us all as intellectuals, with the possibility of challenging norms and generating new perspectives on and conceptualisations of the world. In doing so, we are engaging in an active self-formation that in turn impacts upon the world around us. This puts the ideas of intellectual freedom into the context of Foucault's 'care of the self', linking the ideas of identity and subjectivity.

Foucault's work on subjectivity and care of the self, offers a more optimistic perspective and opens up more possibilities for us to create identity and agency than do the more deterministic ideas about power and discipline and those of Bourdieu and habitus. But Foucault's work, to an extent, remains focussed on the presence of power and the disciplinary operations of power/knowledge (Scheurich & Mackenzie, 2005), where power is seen not just in terms of judging quality, but also as an assessment of conformity to norms and contributing to the processes of normalisation. To develop the notion of subjectivity further in the direction of agency and creativity, I thus turn to the work of Lacan and from Lacan, Ruti.

### **2.3.3 Theoretical theme 3: Agentification and creativity**

This theme uses some perspectives of psychoanalysis in discussing self-formation and subjectivity. A more optimistic view will be discussed on agency within a performative educational climate and the role of, and impact on, our creativity within that self-formation. Whilst the work of Lacan and Ruti are not centred in education, the argument will be that these perspectives have much to say about identity and agency. This thesis is *not* a work focussed on Lacan but is one that draws upon elements of Lacanian theory as a lens through which to view subjectivity, identity and agency in teachers, as will be discussed more fully in chapter 7. Therefore, these complex ideas will be discussed only very briefly.

We start this theme by looking at Lacan's theory of psychological development.

#### **2.3.3.1 Lacan's theory of psychological development.**

In Lacan's theory of the psychological development of the child, three 'orders of the psyche' are identified (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis 2006; Frosh 2012; Johnston 2016). The Lacanian subject has a fragmented and divided nature (Wardle 2016).

In its earliest months the child experiences itself and its environment as a fragmentary, random, formless mass and does not distinguish itself as separate from its environment. From about 6-18 months, the child develops a sense of itself as a whole, as if it had identified with the whole image of itself in a mirror; the mirror stage in Lacan's model of psychosexual development (Felluag 2015). The child has no words for these feelings, so this mirror stage is a world of images and initiates the first order, the Imaginary Order. This is not a world of imagination, but one of perception, and is experienced through images rather than words (Tyson 2015). It is a world of completeness and delight, because with the child's sense of itself as a whole, comes the illusion of control over its environment; this Imaginary Order is one of fantasy (Frosh 2012). The child acts as if whole, whereas they are set into a fragmentary world full of contradictions. The Imaginary Order precedes a child's entry into the next Order, the Symbolic Order, which is initiated by the acquisition of language. It is constituted by meaning and exchange that comes from outside of the subject (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006). The subject is therefore culturally constructed, through language, but does not recognise itself as such, imagining itself to be real and independent of any such symbolic order.

In contrast to the Imaginary, the Symbolic Order recognises the reality of splits and contradictions, because it makes language central. To become part of society, one needs to be subject to language in comprehensible ways, leading to a structuring of one's own and others' thoughts. The Symbolic Order, through language, operates to break up the imaginary fantasy that one can have whatever one wants. The (illusion of) completeness of the Imaginary Order and the Symbolic Order is 'marked by the splitting of the subject and the creation of subjectivity around lack' (Frosh 2012; p.115). So, in the Symbolic Order, the child enters into language, learns and accepts the rules of the society and is therefore able to deal with others. However, this order

is not one of comfortable acceptance. There is a separation from that felt in the Imaginary Order and an associated search for substitutes in the symbolic; an unachievable search as we pursue a completeness, that disappeared when we entered the symbolic through the acquisition of language (Tyson 2015). This is where the loss and lack appear, that are so crucial in Lacan's theory; the Symbolic Order – the world made known through language – 'ushers in the world of lack' (Tyson 2015; p.28). For Lacan, the Symbolic Order is crucial in the formation of the self, as we realise that we are not the whole being we thought we were. We realise that our thoughts, beliefs, values etc. are constituted by our immersion in the symbolic and the development of signifiers (to which we shall return to later).

Lacan's third order of the psyche is the Real. This is seen as being beyond our meaning-making system (Tyson 2015) and refers to that which cannot be symbolised or represented, but somehow is, nevertheless, always "there" as a possibility. It resides outside of the Imaginary and Symbolic orders; the leftovers, under the surface and uncertain (Frosh 2012). It is not synonymous with external reality; 'instead it is real for the subject' (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis 2009; p.156) and must be distinguished from a broader concept of 'reality' which for Lacan is generated across the imaginary and symbolic orders (Eyers 2012). The Real is elusive and is only experienced fleetingly (Tyson 2015).

To summarise: the Imaginary Order is that which is imagined to be true; that one can function autonomously and is a subject who can fully know the truth. The Symbolic Order is that which can be symbolised or represented and so can be manipulated and investigated. The Real is that which can never be known, symbolised or put into words (Frosh 2012).

Having discussed these key ideas of Lacan, we now turn to discussing the perspectives of Lacan and Ruti with specific regard to subjectivity and agency, arriving at more agentic views, including ‘the art of living’.

### **2.3.3.2 The ‘art of living’**

Ruti (2009) looks at subjectivity from a psychoanalytical viewpoint which sees our ‘humanness’ as being socially constructed. Ruti (p.5) defines ‘agency’ in terms of

How much creative freedom we have with respect to our lives, to what extent we can be the authors of our own meanings and how (if at all) we might be able to escape the dominant sociocultural structures that surround us.

In this respect, we are not fully agentic, nor are we completely disempowered. The construction of subjectivity takes place within a social context, so that context limits what we can envision or attain, but we can contribute to the production of meaning, where that meaning means something to us personally. As we have a self, we can intervene in our destinies. Psychoanalysis acknowledges that the self’s constructed state enhances rather than diminishes its creative potential, because we form ourselves in response to the many and varied external influences in our lives. Whilst these influences can impose limits on what we do, as we exercise any creative freedoms that we do have, we can potentially escape the influence of dominant cultures, practices and beliefs within our contexts. This interaction with our destinies, this authoring of our own meaning through the use of our creative freedoms, is our agency.

Ruti argues that a traditional notion of transcendence would view agency as allowing us to overcome, or rise above, the barriers that we face in our lives. But agency is viewed as an ability to live within our actual circumstances, rather than transcend them, in a way that allows us to make the most of those circumstances. So, a

perspective develops that sees greater potential for agentic living, one that has greater potential for the escape from dominant beliefs and practices in which we live. This view then, is not about dominating circumstances or allowing circumstances to dominate us, but is about living with and within them in a way that has meaning for us. This view, Ruti claims, helps us to understand the 'art of living' (2009, p.7).

Ruti picks up the concept of 'lack'; a largely ontological sense of something missing that lies within us as humans. So, there can appear a gap, between that sense of lack and the possibilities of the world. However, this gap, far from being totally disempowering, can help us to engage in the process of becoming a person. Happiness can all too easily be seen as being about achieving goals. However, happiness is much more than that and becomes about 'knowing how to make the most of our status as beings of lack and uncertainty' (Ruti 2009, p.47). This confrontation of lack is an important part of developing subjectivity which gives one access to more possibilities than our fantasies which merely *cover* the lack; it is that confrontation that 'empowers the subject to claim for itself some of the agency of the signifier, that usually belongs to the Other' (Ruti 2012; p.52). This can be exemplified in the previously discussed contexts of the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2012) and my work in ITE. We have a sense of 'lack'. In 2017 we were worried that our performances indicators in Teacher Standards 2 and 5 were weakening and this may be queried by an Ofsted inspection. The 'void' of this lack is given form by a signifier (Teachers' Standards, achievement statistics and Ofsted inspection criteria) in the same way as in a macaroni, the pasta gives form to the void within. If we confront the sense of lack, we can find some empowerment and work towards filling the gap on our own terms, rather than simply to satisfy external agencies and influences.



This 'art of living' is not to avoid lack, nor to cover lack with fantasies, but to confront it and address it in a way that has meaning for us – a reclamation of agency. This is developed further in Ruti's critique of Judith Butler's lack of acknowledgement of the possibility of anything that might elude the grip of power (Ruti 2015) and Butler's claim that the socially determined nature of subjectivity divests us of agency. Ruti (2016a) argues that Butler believes that our inability to control the collective symbolic field into which we are inserted renders us inherently incapable of autonomy.

Instead, Ruti argues that Lacan offers a more radical theory of agency, that allows the possibility of alternatives beyond the influence of the Symbolic Order. In Lacan's own words (cited in Ruti 2015; p.105) 'as the subject occupies the place of the lack in the Other (symbolic order), it can perform separation ... and suspend the reign of the big Other.' This separation, characterised as a 'NO!' to the hegemonic demands of society (Ruti 2015; 2016a), is seen as the opposite of alienation. Ruti's argument here, is that in confronting the lack, the subject can sever its ties with the symbolic order rather than simply acquiescing to normative expectations (Ruti 2015)

This 'Lacanian antinormativity' is framed by Ruti in the context of Lacan's ethics of desire (Ruti 2016b). Lacan identifies two key types of desire; the first is that which cannot be detached from the desire of the Other and is driven by external influences. The second is centred around a focus on confounding normative expectations. These desires that are more primary, use the rebellious drive of the real rather than the more conformist drive of the symbolic (Ruti, 2016b) and so we need to tap into these to defy the demands from external influences.

So, Lacan suggests that a subject can attain a degree of critical distance from the desires of the Other if we can remove some of the layers of social conditioning; moving away from the impacts of normative repetitions (Ruti 2016b) which may or

may not be useful (Van de Vijver, Bazan and Dedandt 2017). So, we can move towards 'the rewards of subjective autonomy ... that might express something elemental about our singular way of taking up the challenge of living' (Ruti, 2016b; p.207).

To round off this section focussing on the more agentic perspectives of Lacan and Ruti, we turn to consider creativity in the context of the 'art of living' and so bring the discussion, full circle, back to creativity where this literature review began.

### **2.3.3.3 The art of living and creativity**

We have examined Lacan's concept of the 'Thing'; 'the primordial object that promises immediate enjoyment' (Ruti 2012; p.95). The Thing however can never be attained, so we are driven to look for things in its place. So, we try to shape meaning around what is essentially a void. In Lacan's theory of subject formation, the 'jouissance' of the imaginary is given up for the symbolic by the intrusion of signifiers. So, Lacan argues, we are brought into being as subjects of lack, having lost something precious. The gap, the uncertainty caused by the lack, left by the signifier, makes us look outwards to compensate. But the gap between the Thing and the objects that our desire discovers, is why we are never entirely satisfied (Ruti 2016b). However, because we lack, we are prompted to create to fill our lack. This is more than just turning negatives into positives, because lack engenders the desire to bring new objects and meanings into existence. It is because we feel lack that we also feel compelled to create and through that creativity we find ways to compensate for our lack (Ruti 2006; 2012); the attempt to fill the gap leads to creative endeavours and so lack is the underpinning of all that is creative and innovative in our lives.

If we confront the lack, we can develop creative endeavours that allow us to address the lack ourselves and therefore take ‘some of the agency of the signifier that usually belongs to the Other’ (Ruti 2012; p.52) as discussed in the previous section. So, we attain creative agency, as we constantly act to fill the void and thus engage in ‘the continuous process of being human’ (Ruti 2009, p.96). Thus emerges, what Ruti sees as the inextricable link between lack, creativity and agency, through self-formation. It is in the lack that we possess creative capacity. ‘It is through our creativity that we manage to survive our lack’ (p.113) and the Other can become a less dominant force in our agency. Ruti (2012) argues that if we were entirely content and self-contained, if nothing were missing or felt to be missing from our lives, we would have no urgency to enter into any creative endeavours or the ‘cycles of invention and re-invention that characterise human existence’ (p.52). So, creativity involves a negotiation between lack and the attempts to fill lack. This ongoing negotiation, that creativity both entails and encapsulates, is what it means, for Ruti, to enter into the ‘art of living’.

To round off the chapter, the following section will highlight and explain the relevance of the three focus areas of the theoretical framework, for ITE and student/early career teachers.

## **2.4 The relevance of the theoretical framework**

The thesis title is *‘Creativity and/or performativity? A critical case study of tensions experienced by pre-service and early career teachers.’* My experience as a teacher, headteacher and teacher educator, suggest to me, that the freedoms to practice creatively in education are potentially influenced by a number of key factors. Firstly, there are the norms of expectation and behaviour of the contexts in which we work. As has been discussed in this chapter, these have become increasingly dominated

by performative, quantifiable measures and practices. Secondly, these practices can and often do, allow managers to exercise power and discipline over teachers, either because they believe it be right or they feel they pressures to do so because of the performative pressures under which they work. This exercise of power can be a strong influence on teaching practice. Thirdly, teacher self-formation and their senses of identity and agency are important. They can be moulded by the exercises of power described above. Teachers may find the strength to be more agentic in the face of these pressures or may be afforded greater agency by managers. Ultimately, the aim of the research was to explore how these three areas – normative expectations and practices, power and discipline and self-formation - interact in the practice of student and early career teachers. As we have moved through the three main focus areas of the theoretical framework, the perspectives have become more agentic. Therefore, they provide the potential, together, for a schema that can offer insight into and ultimately ways of mediating any tensions between creativity and performativity. This has the potential to suggest new approaches to ITE that allow creativity to flourish in the midst of a performative climate. These frameworks will be returned to throughout chapter 4-6 where the case study findings will be discussed. They will also be returned to in chapter 7, where new models to understand and mediate the struggles between creativity and performativity will be presented.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has worked from some foundational literature around creativity as a concept, some of the contextual background of performativity in education and the ways in which tensions may arise between these two. Three core theoretical themes have been discussed, showing progressively more agentic perspectives. Bourdieu's ideas of habitus and Foucault's early work about power and discipline, whilst clear to

see in many institutions, offer limited scope for self-formation, our subjectivity being seen to be dominated by external forces. Foucault's later work on subjectivity and 'care of the self' and the exploration of some of the conceptual ideas of Lacan and Ruti have opened up an altogether more optimistic perspective on our ability, not simply to challenge the external powers that face us, but to live within them in a way that has meaning to us; the art of living. In exploring the 'art of living', the literature comes full circle as we have explored the notion of creativity, as that which is driven by the sense of lack in our lives and which underpins all of our endeavours to live in a way of meaning. In this, a conception of creativity is emphasised that is part of our whole lives, is fundamental to a 'normal' life and to individual and societal well-being. Key notions throughout the chapter come together such as Fromm's 'being mode', Foucault's 'care of the self' and the 'art of living', which show great resonance with each other, set into the context of the struggle for creativity within a performative educational context.

Attention now turns to a discussion of the research approaches that were used to explore the tensions between creativity and performativity in a group of students and early career teachers, and two ITE leaders.

## Chapter 3: Research Methods

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### Introduction

This thesis is focussed on considering how ITE can develop student teacher identity and agency, to support creative practice in the contemporary performative culture of primary education. In doing so, it has engaged with student teachers, early career teachers and ITE leaders, exploring their views and experiences of creativity and performativity and any tensions or struggles between the two.

The key research questions are:

1. Are there tensions/struggles – real or perceived between creative freedoms for teachers and the contemporary performative culture of schools and ITE?
2. What does an engagement with theorising the human subject have to offer as insights to these struggles?
3. How can approaches to promoting creativity in primary schools and primary ITE be reconceptualised, so as to mediate and hopefully ameliorate these struggles?

This chapter will discuss the methods and approaches to this research project, using the four analytical strata articulated by Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005); epistemology, theory, approach and strategy. The epistemological and theoretical foundations of the research will be discussed, before moving onto the more practical approaches and strategies, including ethical considerations. The links between each stratum will be discussed, showing how each feeds into the next as a coherent whole.

The Kamberelis and Dimitriadis framework is used to position the thesis in a wider theoretical position. However, they do not use ontology, explicitly, within this

framework. Ontology can be defined as the study of being, emphasising a theory of existence (King, Horrocks and Brooks 2019; Thomasson 2014) and is concerned with the kind of things that make up reality' (Hofweber 2016). Ontological and epistemological issues are often linked, which can lead to a confusing representation (King and Horrocks 2010). Whilst epistemology can be seen as a theory of knowledge – what it is and how it is obtained - Brinkmann (2012) argues that knowing is not just a representation of something as it is, but is an activity; something people do all the time. Therefore, he argues, that knowing is situated in cultural, social and historical situations. Crucially however, epistemology is always related to ontology, as the construction of knowledge is situated in *our* social world. Coupled with the theoretical framework of chapter 2, based on self-formation and agency, it is important to have an ontological element to the research methods.

The final section will discuss the trustworthiness of the project and its findings (Guba 1981), with a more suitable reframing of more positivist terms such as validity and reliability.

The first section of the chapter will explore Kamberelis and Dimitriadis' (2005) first analytical stratum, epistemology.

### **3.1 The research epistemology**

Epistemology is the philosophical theory of knowledge; it explores how we know, offers a way of establishing what counts as knowledge (King and Horrocks 2010) and asks how we might represent that knowledge (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011). In other words, it debates what knowledge is and how it is obtained (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009); as such it is central to any method of research. Within their analytical strata, Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005, p. 13) define epistemologies as

being 'concerned with knowledge and how people come to have knowledge'. They identify two dominant epistemologies in social science inquiry; objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is an epistemological view, where objects in the world have meaning that exists untainted and independent of the bias or values of an individual, researcher or a research process. Crucial to such research, is the premise that there is an objective reality waiting to be uncovered (King, Horrocks and Brooks 2019). A constructionist epistemology emphasises that knowledge is constructed in social contexts (Silverman 2010). Rather than seeing objects' meaning as being independent from human interpretations, it is through our interpretations and representations, often through language, that meaning is constructed (King and Horrocks 2010). This project positions itself within a constructionist epistemology.

### **3.1.1 Constructionism**

Objectivist perspectives would argue that there is an objective world with inherent meaning. Inquiry that attaches meaning to objects and processes in the world, has simply discovered that inherent meaning, because there are laws and certainties that can be clearly identified. Constructionism generally rejects the idea that there is inherent meaning in the world and that there exists an objective reality, just waiting to be revealed (Gubrium and Holstein 2015). Meaning is not something to be discovered, but is 'constructed in interaction with objective (but not inherently meaningful) reality' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005; p. 14). Therefore, knowledge and meaning are likely to be constructed differently, according to the contexts of the construction; the perspectives and positions of the groups or individuals concerned. Hence, any object or process may have a variety of meanings attributed, all of which may be reasonable. Constructionism builds on the notion that knowledge and meaning are constructed on the basis of experiences and that knowledge construction is an active, rather than passive process (Savin-Baden and Major



2013). In relation to research, constructionism refutes the idea that data exists as entities, waiting to be revealed through inquiry (as viewed by an objectivist epistemology) and argues that knowledge is produced in and through the process of interaction with objects, people and environments (Brinkmann, 2017).

Ontological perspectives may be described as realist or relativist (King and Horrocks 2010). A realist ontology would see that there is a single real world that exists out there. A relativist ontological perspective would see the potential for multiple realities; society is seen as being produced by people engaging with one another. Therefore, a constructivist epistemology would align naturally with a relativist ontology (King, Horrocks and Brooks 2019). As will be discussed, the researcher reflexivity is important in the research approach. I will argue that this has been a key part of producing rich data, whilst recognising the role between researcher and participant. So, the ontological and epistemological perspectives align with my role as researcher. My reflexivity is an important consideration, as it impacts on the idea of *social* constructionism; a development of constructionism.

### **3.1.2 Social Constructionism**

As an epistemology, social constructionism is the idea that individuals construct meaning through interacting with other people. There is a shared knowledge and reality, that individuals make sense of through dialogue and negotiation with each other (Savin-Baden and Major 2013). Social constructionism builds on the work of Vygotsky and Bruner. Vygotsky rejected the idea of biological reductionism to explain complex phenomena. This theoretical approach tries to explain phenomena in society in terms of biology. Thus, it denies the phenomena any causal autonomy (Scott 2014); they are biologically determined. Vygotsky argued, that the most

interesting and complex processes originate in social interactions (Ageyev 2005; Miller 2011). In considering the nature of knowledge, he rejected the idea that it was purely information, in favour of a view of knowledge as the formation or construction of concepts (Kozulin et al. 2005). Knowledge is seen as being created rather than existing out there, waiting to be discovered. Vygotsky laid much emphasis on the role of others, in supporting an individual to construct meaning and knowledge (Trudge 1990). Meanwhile, Bruner (2006) argued that Vygotsky's principle for making sense of the world was 'interpretive reconstruction of relevant circumstances' (p.194). Bruner saw meanings as being in the mind but originating in and deriving their significance from the cultural context in which they were created; the notion of the 'cultural situatedness' of meaning (Bruner, 2009). Hence, Bruner argues that learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting and that the reality that we assign to the worlds in which we live and work 'is a constructed one...reality is made not found' (Bruner 1996; p.19). Social constructionist research, as seen in this thesis, would explore how people construct meaning and would use methods 'involving dialogue and negotiation between the researcher and the participants' (Savin-Baden and Major 2013, p.28). Savin-Baden and Major, however, make clear the distinction between this social constructionist epistemology and a social constructivist learning theory, which builds on the epistemology, arguing that individuals learn for themselves by working with others (Pritchard, 2009).

In a social constructionist epistemology, knowledge is seen as being produced through social construction and is 'actively created ... and co-constructed (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; p.54). Social constructionism is concerned with human meaning and understanding, which have their beginnings in social interaction and so, can vary over time, in different contexts and with different people (Lock and Strong, 2010).

Thus, social constructionism invites us to be critical of the idea, that observations of the world yield objective knowledge, unproblematically (Burr 2003).

This research project was based firmly on engaging with student teachers', early career teachers' and ITE leaders' experiences, perceptions and beliefs. The meanings attached to, the reflections on and interpretations of these experiences, perceptions and beliefs have also been explored. As will be shown later in this chapter, the principle research strategy was interviews. So, constructionism and more so, social constructionism, make the most appropriate epistemological positioning of this research.

### **3.2 The underlying research theories**

Within the context of qualitative research, theories are assumptions and claims that can be used to interpret and explain processes and ideas (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). Theories 'help to ground the way that research engages with new ideas and are processes for trying to make sense of phenomena of interest' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005; p.15). In parallel to the two major research epistemologies outlined in section 3.1.1, two associated theoretical research positions can be identified; positivism and interpretivism. This research project is grounded in the theoretical perspective of interpretivism.

#### **3.2.1 Interpretivism**

Positivism, largely aligned with the objectivist epistemology (King and Horrocks 2010) is based on the idea that there is a meaningful reality that operates independent of human experience and this can only be known through empirical observation; reality is there to be discovered (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005). Positivist researchers distinguish between fact and value judgement, looking for

objective reality. They seek a single interpretation, allowing them to make generalisations which are free of time and context (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011; Edirisingha 2012). A positivist view sees a single version of reality, that there is knowledge out there to be found and that this exists outside and independent of human consciousness (Inglis and Thorpe 2012).

Interpretivism, on the other hand, (aligned much more with a constructionist epistemology) arose in reaction to the assumptions of objectivism about objective measurement and its lack of attention to context. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) identify three key features of the interpretivist paradigm. Firstly, is its interpretive aspect. It is an insider perspective, that tries to understand people's lived experiences, from their perspectives and so focusses not on facts but on the meanings that people attach to their experiences. Secondly, it views reality as socially constructed and inseparable from the contexts in which the social construction takes place. Thirdly, it challenges the objectivist assumption, that research is value-free and objective and instead recognises and works with the influences that researchers have on data collection and interpretation.

Interpretivism, therefore, is concerned with how the social world is experienced and understood. It sees these experiences and understandings as rarely unproblematic and straightforward. Interpretivism, therefore, is flexible enough to accommodate multiple versions of reality (King and Horrocks 2010). It is based on an epistemological view, that meanings are the most significant things; these are to be found in people's minds and hence, they are culturally shaped (Inglis and Thorpe 2012).

Interpretivism is, however, a very broad term and whilst qualitative approaches are 'generally founded upon theoretical perspectives rooted in interpretivism (King and

Horrocks 2010, p.11), there are several distinct strands within this overall theoretical perspective. These include hermeneutics and phenomenology. Within the epistemological foundation of constructionism/social-constructionism outlined in section 3.1 and the overarching theoretical base of interpretivism, this research project lies broadly within the phenomenological strand of interpretivism. However, a note of caution should be sounded at this point, as phenomenology is not a perfect fit for the project, as will be discussed below.

### **3.2.2 Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is rooted in the work of Husserl, Heidegger and Hegel. Husserl criticised objective scientific methods, favouring a deeper examination of human experience of the world (Savin-Baden 2013, Boer and Fontana 2012). Building on this insight, phenomenological approaches seek to understand how the world is perceived from the perspectives of people. It explores how they describe the meaning of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Cresswell 2013), seeking to find what is common across varied experiences of that phenomenon. Hence, a phenomenological approach examines how people see and understand world, how they respond to particular circumstances and asks what the feelings and emotions are, associated with this. Phenomenology studies how contexts are created through action and interaction as well as how contexts make action and interaction possible.

As phenomenology developed, it became less focussed on human consciousness in general and more concerned with how a particular group of people experience a particular set of circumstances at a particular time. This is Husserl's idea of the 'lifeworld'; 'a shared world of meanings, in which humans live their lives and experience significant phenomena' (Husserl 1936; cited in Brinkmann 2017, p.580).

This lifeworld focusses on the everyday world of the research participant. Such research tries to gain access to that world, in order to describe it, before going on to explain it. If research is about learning something new, then phenomenology is a perspective that places learning into the context of our everyday lived experiences and our participation in the world.

Some key principles of a pure phenomenological approach (Savin-Baden 2013) would include:

- Phenomenological reduction. This involves a setting aside of preconceptions and previous knowledge by the researcher to enable a fresh view of the phenomena, without the interference of prior interpretation (King and Horrocks, 2010).
- Description. The use of language to gather and communicate the phenomenon to others.
- The search for essence: that which makes it what it is, by looking at a phenomenon in different contexts. This allows the researcher to arrive at a description of persistent characteristics.

The argument here, is that whilst phenomenology offers a theoretical basis for this research, the practical approach, as will be discussed later, is not purely phenomenological. The emphasis on social construction, not to mention the forefronting of concepts and ideas derived from social theory, inevitably means some letting go of the 'bracketing' that is central to traditional phenomenology. This will be discussed further, in section 3.4. First, however, I will explain the third of Kamberelis and Dimitriadis' analytical strata, the research approach

### **3.3 The research approach**

Returning to the analytical strata of Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005), research approaches are seen as formations that provide flexible structures that underlie the practicalities of research, such as designing and carrying out a project. The word “approach” is deliberately used in place of the more usual “methods” because of the connotations of methods as inflexible and prescribed techniques for carrying out research properly. In doing so, Kamberelis and Dimitriadis aim to put practice at the forefront of research engagement. Sets of guiding assumptions and techniques are used as an approach, but, within this guiding frame, different techniques are combined and adapted as they are used and reworked. Approaches are therefore seen as exploratory, in that ‘their primary function is to move us along in our attempts to understand the problems that interest us’ (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005; p. 18).

The overall research approach in this project is a case study approach. The following section will outline the key features, strengths and weakness of a case study approach and offer a rationale for its use, situating it within the established epistemological and theoretical foundations.

#### **3.3.1 A case study approach**

A case study is an ‘inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context’ (Yin 2013; p.16). The ‘case’ is a unit of human activity which can only be understood in its context and indeed merges with its context (Gillham 2009). A case study is a detailed examination of a setting or event (Wellington 2015). In this respect, a case study approach examines how people and the structures in which they live and work, interrelate; ‘it acknowledges

that the dynamics of interaction must be the starting point for research' (Savin-Baden 2013).

The essential idea of a case study approach, is that one case, or a small number of cases are studied in detail to develop as full an idea as possible of the case and that this can give insight into the wider group, from which the case was drawn (Kumar 2014).

Some key characteristics of a case study approach can be outlined (Punch 2009; Savin-Baden 2013). Firstly, the case is a case of something and needs clear identification. Whilst this may seem obvious, a lack of clarity on this point can lead to unfocussed research. The case study needs focus, but also needs to preserve the wholeness of the case. In this project, the 'case' is primary ITE in one university. The case is specifically focused on investigating the views and experiences of creativity in schools amongst final year student teachers engaged in one module, *Creativity in Primary Education*. A second key characteristic is that use of multiple sources of data and multiple collections of data are likely and desirable; as Punch (2009; p.119) argues, the case is studied in detail 'using whatever methods and data seem appropriate'. A third key characteristic is that cases may be singular allowing greater depth in one case, or multiple giving greater opportunities to show similarities (or explore variations) across cases.

There are different types of case study approaches, but this project could be termed as an 'interpretative case study', which aims to go beyond description, and 'seeks first-hand construction of theory' (Savin-Baden 2013; p.156). Through the presentation of in-depth findings, I will seek to develop theory as part of the interpretation of meaning in relation to the case study.



There are advantages and disadvantages of a case study approach (Yin, 2012 and 2019; Savin-Baden 2013). The advantages include its flexibility, its ability to investigate in depth and its capacity to understand complexity. The disadvantages include its potential intrusiveness and what can be seen as a tendency towards a simplistic world view, based on a single case or small set of cases. This relates to one of the most common criticisms of a case study approach i.e. the difficulty in making generalisations from the findings of a single case or small set of cases. It is to this that I now turn.

### **3.3.2 Generalisability of case study findings**

Generalising (making a general statement or finding by inferring from specific cases) is a standard aim in quantitative research. Using defined statistical and sampling procedures allows for a confidence in the representatives of a sample, allowing generalisation to wider populations. However, that kind of sampling is generally not available or used in qualitative case study research, where one or a small set of cases are used, and sampling is rarely based on a random selection (Silverman 2009). One response to this is, that generalisation is not the aim of this case study research and in wider terms, generalisation is not, in itself, a necessary aim for research. Punch (2010) argues that new learning about the case has value in its own right. Yin (2013; 2019) on the other hand, argues that in a case study, while generalisations to populations may be problematic, case studies *are* generalisable to theoretical propositions. The argument is, that the goal of a case study is to expand and generalise theory. This is what Yin (2012) and Punch (2010) refer to as ‘analytical generalisation’. This involves, first of all, developing a conceptual claim that shows how the particular case study demonstrates the relationships between a set of ideas, theories and events. Then, as a second step, these conceptual claims are applied to contexts outside the case where similar concepts and theories may be

relevant. Plowright (2010) argues that generalisability involves arriving at 'justified or warrantable claims' (p. 36) which are then applied to a wider group than that represented by the participants. The view that case studies cannot make generalisations, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues to be a misunderstanding. His argument is that one *can* often generalise for a case study, but that that should not be an aim in itself, as formal generalisation is over-valued; the particular example has a value that should not be undervalued. So, the argument here is that a case study, where possible, generalises theoretical propositions to other relevant contexts rather than whole populations (Gomm, Foster and Hammersley 2000).

On the positive side, because qualitative case studies such as this, are not aiming purely for generalisability of their findings, they are arguably more free to use non-probability sampling approaches. One such approach is purposive sampling (Stake 2005). Purposive sampling focuses on choosing a sample that will best enable the searcher to answer their research questions. Rather than seeking to represent a particular population (although a strong case for the trustworthiness of the findings still needs to be made), the sample choice is made according to the purposes of the research. As such, purposive sampling relies on the judgement of the researcher, when it comes to selecting the cases/people that are to be studied, based on their relevance to the research question (Lavrakas 2008; Laerd Dissertation n.d.). Such purposive sampling was adopted for this study, working with participants with particular interest in creativity and teaching. This is discussed in more detail below

### **3.3.3 The focus case study**

In this thesis, the case under investigation is the views and experiences of creativity in schools and ITE, of student and early career teachers and ITE leaders. The case is located in primary ITE, in one university and specifically focused on final year

student teachers engaged in one module, *Creativity in Primary Education*. For each participant their views and experiences in formal school placement schools and subsequent employment schools is investigated. The focus ITE module is one in which I was fully immersed as tutor and module leader.

Six student teachers and two ITE leaders (myself included) were selected. This was seen as a manageable balance between too many participants (potentially leading to a lack of depth in interviewing, as data could become too big) and too few (potentially reducing the breadth of issues that could be examined and the richness of data that could arise from multiple data points). Sampling was purposive and included a group of student teachers on my Primary Education (QTS) course and colleagues in primary ITE. The student teachers were drawn from participants in the *Creativity in Primary Education* module and were volunteers. They had shown an interest in and engagement in, some of the deeper theoretical elements of the module and the emerging research questions. They had in my judgement, shown a strength of character and confidence to engage in honest and open interviews where co-construction of knowledge was the focus (see section 3.4.1). I believed that they would be prepared to give accounts and explanations, even if they could be seen as providing disconfirming evidence for my research. They were all prepared to continue the research relationship after achieving QTS.

The inclusion of Colleagues in ITE was an additional element to the sample, following two Ofsted inspections of the ITE department in 2015 and 2017. The sample was one colleague, a fellow senior leader in ITE, who had overall responsibility for Ofsted across all QTS routes, along with me. Within this, I was more of a conversant than interviewer, as the intention was to make sense of *our* shared experiences of Ofsted as co-participants in the ITE leadership team.

My role in purposive sampling and case selection does open the study up to criticism of bias and subjectivity. However, as the overall aim was not wide generalisability, and as the research project sits within a relativist ontology and social-constructionist epistemology (as discussed earlier in this chapter), a purposive rather than a probability-based sampling approach, based on the selection criteria outlined above, is justifiable. More positively, the participants' roles allowed for the co-construction of knowledge, based on their relevant experience and personal characteristics, allowing them to engage fully, confidently, and at times challengingly, with the research project.

I now move on to discuss the fourth analytical stratum of the research methods

### **3.4 The research strategies**

In Kamberelis and Dimitriadis' analytical strata (2005), research strategies are the particular practices and procedures that were used to gather and analyse data for a research project and to report its findings. The underlying epistemology and theories behind the research, and the choice of research approach, in this case, a case study approach, directly informed the choice of interviews as the primary research strategy, as will be shown. These were conducted at similar points in the BA (Hons) Primary Education course, over a period of five years, gathering in-depth data from a sample of students. These were followed up by a single email interview (as opposed to a direct face to face interview) to gather data that represented all of the participants at the same *actual* time, but which represented quite different points in their careers as primary school teachers. One additional interview was conducted with an ITE colleague.

### **3.4.1 Research interviews and the rationale for their use**

Research interviews are one of the most commonly used data collection strategies in qualitative research (Brinkmann 2017). The rationale behind their use as the primary data collection strategy in this project, is the connection with the underlying epistemology and theory outlined earlier. A constructionist epistemology emphasises the role of language and social interaction (King and Horrocks 2010) and in an interview context, humans cannot remove themselves from an active process of knowledge production. The research interview is a social interaction (Wooffitt and Widdicombe 2012), a relationship and also a 'social construction' (Brinkmann 2017; p.578); a co-production of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee. The interview is framed by the social and cultural circumstances that brought the interviewer and interviewee together. Therefore, the outcomes are socially situated and subject to the interpretations and discussions of the interviewer and interviewee and the context of the interview itself (Warren 2012). Traditional methodological literature may emphasise a passive subjectivity; a 'vessels of answers' view (Gubrium and Holstein 2015) where information is seen as something that is already there, waiting to be extracted and the interviewer stands detached from that data. A constructionist epistemology would see a contrasting image of active subjectivity, that 'appreciates the narrative agency of the subjects' of both interviewer and interviewee (Gubrium and Holstein 2015; p.33). In other words, both have a full role to play in the co-construction of knowledge. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) develop these ideas with the metaphors of the interviewer as miner or as traveller. These two metaphors represent different epistemological conceptions of the research interview as a process. The miner is seen as a knowledge collector, digging out valuable nuggets of precious metal that pre-exist and crucially, are therefore uncontaminated by the miner. The interviewer as a traveller, travels to

places, talks with people who inhabit them, encourages them to tell their stories and brings back the accounts on his/her return. Meaning is revealed in the interpretation of these accounts. So, in the two metaphors, knowledge is either given (miner) or constructed (traveller).

Lyotard (1984) argues that the modern conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is outdated. A post-modern epistemology sees knowledge as neither within a person or outside in the world but existing in the relationships between people.

Constructionism sees these relationships rather than the individual as the place where knowledge lies. A post-modern interview approach therefore would focus on the interview as a 'production site of knowledge' (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; p.53).

If we wish to make connections between the nature of an inquiry, the questions design, methods and strategy, then an integrity in epistemology is required (Marshall and Rossman 2011). It can be seen here that there are robust links between a constructionist epistemology and the relativist ontology discussed earlier and the choice of interviews (with the interview as 'traveller') as the primary data collection strategy.

The theoretical underpinning of the research methods discussed earlier was interpretivist, more specifically, phenomenology. The phrase 'lived experience' is common in qualitative research and this often leads to a 'lifeworld' focus in research (Brinkmann 2017; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; King and Horrocks 2010). The phenomenological rationale for the use of interviews is underpinned by the characterisation of a semi-structured or open interview (to be discussed more fully in the following section) as 'an interview with the *purpose* of obtaining *descriptions* of the *lifeworld* of the interviewee in order to *interpret the meaning* of the described phenomena' (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, p.6: emphasis added). There are four key

ideas here. *Purpose*: an interview serves the researcher's goal to produce knowledge. *Descriptions*: the interview focusses more on experiences, feelings, perceptions than questions such as 'why?' *Lifeworld*: the 'lifeworld' concept originated with Husserl and is defined as 'a shared world of meaning in which human live their lives and experience significant phenomena' (cited in Brinkmann 2009; p. 580). *Interpret the meaning*: an interviewer is interested in how people experience the world, but often also engages in interpretations of the experiences which are observed. These experiences, or lifeworld phenomena, are rarely transparent and can be open to varied interpretations. So, it can be seen here that the use of interviews sits within the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of the research methods

### 3.4.2 How interviews were used in this research project

**A research interview is a conversation with some structure and purpose (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) The interviewer/researcher is seeking response for a particular reason. The interview can also be seen as a relationship, a social interaction with varying roles, positions, relations and forms of agency (Brinkmann 2017). This does not equate, however, to a conversation between equal partners. The main differences between various interviews lie in the level of structure. These variations are often characterised as structured, unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann,, 2017) although Gillham (2000) sees this as more of a continuum, from unstructured to structured (**

Figure ).

**Figure 1: A continuum of interview structure (Gillham 2000)**

Unstructured ←————→ Structured						
Listening to other people's conversations; a kind of verbal observation	Using 'natural conversation' to ask research questions	'Open-ended' interviews; just a few key questions. E.g. 'elite interviews	Semi-structured interviews i.e. open and closed questions	Recoding schedules; in effect verbally administered questionnaire	Semi-structured questionnaire; multiple choice and open questions	Structured questionnaire : simple, specific, closed questions

The interviews used in this project would be characterised as open ended/semi-structured as they had a small number of set questions, but were largely quite open and responsive to what the interviewee said. This type of interview is better placed to make use of dialogue as a knowledge producing stagey as there is more flexibility to follow up on lines of thinking that seem important and is a balance between flexibly and structure. Of particular importance is Brinkmann's (2009) assertion that, in open ended/semi-structured interviews, the interviewer has a greater chance of 'becoming visible as a knowledge producing participant' (p.579). This reinforces the constructionist epistemological underpinning, and the 'traveller' metaphor explored earlier. In an open ended/semi-structured interview, the interviewer is not simply a detached entity, with no agenda, interests or foci and it is important to understand the role of the interviewer in knowledge production. The way that an interviewee responds is, to an extent, shaped by and aligns with the context of the interview (Wooffitt and Widdicombe 2012). This does not equate with the interviewee simply agreeing with the interviewer, but the interviewer can play a significant role in what



the interviewee ends up saying. This researcher positionality will be discussed further under the ethical considerations section. In addition to the one-to-one interviews, all of the student/qualified teacher participants were also asked to complete a short email interview, all at the same time in May 2018. Having explored student teacher views and experiences through one to one interviews, over a five year period, the intention of the short email interview was to capture a “where are they now?” picture as all participants had been teaching for between one and six years at that point. There is no significant opportunity in such an online interview for the sort of social construction possible in the lengthy one to one interviews; no such claim is made. They do however provide a useful snapshot of the views and experiences on creativity in schools of participants, for comparison to the rich data gathered in their individual interviews.

So, the choice of open ended/semi-structured interviews makes sense, within the overall epistemological and theoretical backgrounds highlighted earlier, where knowledge and meaning are not seen merely as existing objects to be revealed but are seen as things to be constructed. Interviews allow these constructions to take place and allow phenomena to be investigated in depth and within the contexts of the participants. The interviews here, make no claim to researcher objectivity; rather the researcher is a part of the social-construction and indeed is an interview participant as well in one case (chapter 6).

Having discussed the research approaches and strategies we now move to looking specifically at how the data was collected and analysed.

### **3.4.3 Strategies for data collection and analysis**

First attention will focus on the strategies for data collection.

### 3.4.3.1 Strategies for data collection

The majority of participants were final year student teachers on the BA Primary Educator (with QTS) course at York St John University, who were taking the final year elective module *Creativity in Primary Education*, on which I was also the main tutor. The student teacher interviews took place either during the final school placement on the course, where this was possible, or soon afterwards; in both cases, this was the late stages of their QTS course. The interviews took place at similar times on the course, over a period from 2012 to 2017. The follow up email interviews all took place at the same time (May 2018) meaning that each student participant was then at a range of stages in their careers as primary teachers from NQTs to teachers with six years' experience. There was one unplanned, short, face to face interview with one participant, Simon. Having completed his email interview, he then contacted me to apologise for his negative responses. He asked if he could explain these. I agreed to meet him to allow him to talk. This was a very lengthy meeting. He agreed for it to be summarised as a short interview. This took place in July 2018. I did not do this for other participants, as the request to meet and talk came, unprompted, from Simon.

An additional interview took place: one with a fellow senior leader in ITE at York St John. This was included, as, during 2017, we went through a two-part Ofsted inspection and the opportunity to gather data relevant to the research context was taken. This took the form of an open ended/semi-structured interview but of a less structured and more conversational style, where the interviewer/interviewee roles, although still clear, were more blurred than in the student teacher interviews. The rationale behind this draws on Brinkmann (2017) who argues that an interview is a dialogic process, where people come together and 'create new possibilities for

subjectivity and action' (p.586). This interview was one between partners in ITE leadership, who had just shared a common and intense experience of Ofsted. The intention was to capture that shared experience and explore the commonalities and variations in our views, feeling and response to that experience, as a co-creation of knowledge. There was therefore a difference in the interviewer/ee relationship, as we were assembling accounts of experience *together* more fully than in the student interviews and therefore were more fully 'constructive practitioners' (Gubrium and Holstein 2012, p.33). There was, in this interview context, a greater degree of the 'active subjectivity' discussed earlier. For these reasons a slightly different interview approach was seen to be appropriate.

The case study was conducted between 2012 and 2018 (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: A timeline of the practical research**

Participants	Date	Position	Research strategy
Mike	March 2012	Final year Primary Education (QTS) student teacher	Open ended/semi structured interview, close to the end of final school placement.
Sonia	March 2012		
Stuart	March 2014		
Simon	March 2016		
Evelyn	May 2017		
Sarah	May 2017		
Carla	November 2017	ITE leader	Open ended interview, shortly after Ofsted inspection of ITE.
Peter		Researcher and ITE leader	
Mike (6 years)	May 2018	Qualified, working primary teacher (years of experience shown)	Follow up email interview
Sonia (6 years)			
Stuart (4 years)			
Simon (2 years)			
Evelyn (1 year)			
Sarah (1 year)			
Simon (2 years)	July 2018	Qualified, working primary teacher (years of experience shown)	Short, unstructured interview

**Note:** Where names are repeated, this is the same participant

I will now focus on strategies for data analysis.

### **3.4.3.2 Strategies for data analysis**

The interviews were transcribed in full (appendix 1) Kumar (2014) identifies three ways to write about qualitative research findings;

1. narratives to describe a situation;
2. the identification of key themes from data collected;
3. In addition to (2) the quantification of those key themes based on their frequency of occurrence; a measure of their prevalence.

The initial approach to the analysis of the interviews was the identification of key themes (Punch 2010; Kumar 2014) using coding. The intention here was to get an initial broad view of the issues that were arising in the interview transcripts. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011; p.216) argue that codes are 'one of the central activities in qualitative data analysis' and that this begins as the researcher starts to notice issues in the data. Coding is the attachment of a code that tries to capture the meaning of each piece of data. These codes may be descriptive or analytical.

Descriptive codes are used to summarise and are often derived from the text itself.

Analytical codes are derived, based on what the researcher believes is going on – there is an interpretation of meaning (Savin-Baden 2013). The use of inductive analytical codes allows the researcher to read data and take note of issues arising from the participants' responses. Inductive codes reflect what is important to them rather than what is important to the researcher; 'searching for inductive codes allows the data to speak for itself' (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011; p.218).

The development of codes involved analysis of the interview transcripts. Initially, key themes were identified and coded by analysis of their content. Transcripts were studied several times; sometimes key themes were split into sub themes to highlight subtleties of meaning. Sometimes themes were conflated. The themes from the first transcript were used as a starting point for the next transcript, as suggested by Punch (2010), but there no attempt was made to make data fit themes; if new themes arose, they were added. As will be seen in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the final themes were used as the basis for the presentation and discussion of the qualitative data.

The use of coding, whilst helpful initially in approaching a wealth of complex, rich qualitative data, is, by its nature, reductive. This helps to make sense of large qualitative data sets and is about denoting things and their frequency of occurrence (Denscombe 2010). However, it risks the loss of nuance and subtlety.

To gain a more holistic view of the transcripts and better balance the reduction of the data on one hand, but avoid losing richness on the other, narrative analysis was then used. Punch and Oancea (2014; p.238) argue that while approaches to analysis based on coding and categorising data are useful in identifying recurring themes, 'they by no means exhaust the data, or possibilities for their exploration'. There is risk of fragmentation and decontextualization of the data. Narrative analysis allows a focus on the biographical experiences of the participants (Gray 2014). Based on a small number of stories (seven in this case study), narrative analysis 'can be used to cast a light on the culture, complexities and contradictions of organisations' (Gray 20-14; p.172). This kind of approach not only allows but actively uses 'the interplay between interviewer and interviewee to actively constrict life histories (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011; p.198). Therefore, the use of narrative analysis, building

on initial coding of broad recurring themes and issues, is in line with the social constructionist epistemology of the research and the notion of the interview as 'traveller' ((Kvale and Brinkmann 2009), already discussed earlier in this chapter. Narrative analysis counters more realist assumptions and approaches based on collecting information, shifting the focus to the social construction of realities and identities (Gilbert 2008; Denscombe 2010).

Initial coding and narrative can be a process of inductive reasoning, where data is forefronted, leading to the building of knowledge without too many preconceived ideas (Brinkmann 2012). Another form of inference is deduction. This time, starting with established theory, deduction seeks to produce testable hypotheses from general theory. This can form the basis of new theory, the relevance of which can be tested in the light of the existing theory (Brinkmann 2012). However, these forms of inference tend to assume that the research process engages with stable entities that can be studied in multiple cases so that we can build general knowledge. The forefronting of data (induction) or theory (deduction) was not quite the right fit for data analysis. Brinkmann (2012) argues that a third form of reasoning - abduction - is needed in situations of uncertainty, where an understanding or explanation of an effect is required.

Svennevig (2001) argues that the notion of abduction (although introduced by Aristotle) was developed as an explicit theory of inference by the American philosopher, Peirce. Abduction seeks insight, where conclusions do not always follow logically from data (Zalta, 2017). It is an iterative process, not totally driven by either the data or the theory. There is a moving back and forwards between the two in the construction of new knowledge; the abductive aspect lies in 'the creative moment in the interpretive process' (Brinkmann 2012: p.46). Svennevig (2001)

argues that whilst induction provides greater certainty than abduction, is it less productive as 'induction only becomes productive in combination with abduction' (Svennevig 2001; p.5). So, the data analysis in this project started largely with the data itself, as an inductive process. As themes arose, these were reflected upon in the light of the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter 2. This allowed an iterative process (Brinkmann 2012) to be used. The emerging themes from the data prompted new lines of theoretical investigation. The theoretical framework prompted new themes to be investigated. This was *not* a case of data analysis targeted at proving theory, or theoretical investigation aimed purely at matching emerging data. The inductive process of content analysis, became, as Svennevig (2001) argues, more productive when combined with abduction; the data and theory worked together.

After analysis and for the purpose of reporting (see chapters 4, 5, and 6), the participants were organised into three groups, that highlight different aspects of the research findings. This was not planned at the outset and the participants were not selected on this basis; for reporting, it was a researcher decision based on the interpretations of meanings that emerged during data analysis.

#### **3.4.4 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations applied to all stages of this research. The research was conducted with the current British Educational Research Association guidelines for educational research (2018) and the appropriate ethical clearance was gained from the university prior to the research commencing (REF: UC/10/5/12/PR). Ethics can be seen as 'the correctness of a particular behaviour' and the 'moral principles that govern behaviour' (Savin-Baden 2013; p.319). The required ethical review/clearance however, whilst an important step should not be seen as the totality or end of ethical

considerations; there should be an ongoing ethical conduct in all stages of all research, applying through the design, implementation and reporting of a project and applying to all stakeholders of the research; the participants, researcher, sponsors where applicable and the readers of the research (Wellington 2015; Punch 2010; Kumar 2014). Silvermann (2009) highlights five general principles for ethical considerations. Each of these will be discussed briefly, highlighting how this research project was conducted ethically. The final two having been conflated for ease of discussion.

#### **3.4.4.1 Voluntary participation**

This a basic tenet of ethical research. In all cases, participants were invited to participate. The location of the research within the creativity module was made explicit from the outset, as was the basic ground rule that anyone who did participate did so entirely at their own choosing; they had the right to withdraw at any time. A minority of the students who were part of the module, chose to be involved, but those that did, did so enthusiastically, professionally and nobody chose to withdraw. However, it must be acknowledged, that there is no clear way for me to know whether the involvement or responses from participants was genuine or performing for my sake as the module and course leader. That is a danger of approaching research in a social-constructionist fashion, with known participants. I can be clear that the participants were given no inducements or preferential treatment; knowing them well, I would argue, allowed me to make judgements as a researcher as to the authenticity of their responses. As I have said earlier in the chapter, part of the criteria for selection of participants, was to work with students, who I believed would express their views, irrespective of any view of what I might want to hear. This is not



a guarantee of participant objectivity, but the above shows how I have considered these issues.

#### **3.4.4.2 Protection of participants**

A researcher may be in a position of relative power over participants. In this case I was module tutor and leader and also course director. Savin-Baden (2013) talks about the need for researcher to show excellent treatment of individuals and applies this equally to participants and non-participants. It would be illogical and unjust (as well as unethical) to argue a case for voluntary participation, if non-participants were not treated in the same way as participants. For example, no inducements were offered to participants and all students were assured, for example, that their access to the module and the conduct of its assessment would be unaffected by their participation (or not) in the research. Privacy and confidentiality is an important aspect of participant protection (Kumar 2014) and BERA (2018) consider the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data to be the norm in educational research. All data - audio and video recording of interviews, transcripts and questionnaire returns - was stored on virus protected computers backed up to external hard drives that were not in everyday use, with the original recording them removed from the recording devices. Participants were anonymised in reporting.

#### **3.4.4.3 Informed consent**

In BERA's (2018) ethical guidelines, voluntary informed consent is defined as 'the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway' (p.5). Anyone who was involved as a participant was asked to complete a consent form, having had the aims of the research explained to them. The research did not engage with any participants who

would be considered as vulnerable adults or people below the age of 18, so there were no issues about the ability of participants to give their voluntary informed consent.

#### **3.4.4.4 Risk assessment for participants**

Savin-Baden (2013) talks about the 'beneficence' of research; protecting participants from harm, balancing risks and benefits and having an approach where participants and non-participants are treated equally. The balance of risks and benefits is one between the risks to the participants and the benefit of the research. There is also a need to balance the demands of the researcher pursuing knowledge and the rights of the participants who are potentially under threat (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). BERA (2018) state that research design should always seek to eliminate any risk to participants and any predictable detriment arising from the research project or its findings should be made clear. In the same way if any unexpected detriment to participants, arises during the research, these too must be brought to their attention straight away. As before it is important that any detriment is also considered for those who do not participate, either by design or choice.

There were no risks of physical harm in this project. However, as most of the participants were students and I was a module tutor/leader and course director, there was the potential that these students could be seen as, or feel, vulnerable, due to the position and role of the researcher vis a vis the student participants. There was also the potential for confusion, as I, to mitigate these position/role risks, conducted the interviews explicitly out of my role as course leader and in the role of researcher. Whilst I found this an easy change, there was the potential for students to find this more problematic.

This raises the issue of researcher positionality. In establishing the epistemological and theoretical foundations of the research and discussing the approaches and strategies of the project, there has been no claim to researcher objectivity. Indeed, within the social-constructionist epistemology, the researcher positionality i.e. both working and researching within the same context, is beneficial to the overall aim of constructing new knowledge. There are, however, ethical considerations. The chosen research strategy of interviews, whilst needing a degree of self-detachment, is still founded on human interaction. In this case, the changing of role from course leader to researcher for student interviews, required a 'moral responsibility of fairness' (Gillham 2009; p.43) in dealing responsibly the implications of that power asymmetry (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). If the researcher is, as has been argued in this case, to be more a 'traveller' than a 'miner' in the conduct of interviews, then the researcher and participants will interact, exploring versions of events. However, those versions do not pre-exist the interviews and are co-constructed through social interaction within the interviews (King and Horrocks 2010). As the researcher manages these interactions, there is a need to recognise that role and consider the issue of reflexivity. An interpretive paradigm acknowledges the subjectivity of the participants and the researcher, as their perspectives will reflect their subjective views of the issue under investigation. In coming together in a research interview context, each reacts to the perspective of the other and so each will contribute, within the interview process, to the co-construction of realities (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011).

#### **3.4.4.5 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a consideration of how a researcher's beliefs, experiences, identities etc. may impact upon the research. This is particularly important when interviews are

seen as events of co-construction, because it 'locates researchers as involved and implicated in the entire process of knowledge production (King and Horrocks 2010; p.134). In this project, this was taken very seriously. In every interview, the intended non-power role of the researcher (i.e. not acting in the course lead role) was made clear. The research was not setting out to prove a point (Yin, 2013) and, as has been discussed, sought participants who were judged as being sufficiently confident and articulate to present views, some of or all of which may be seen as disconfirming to the research aims. During interviews, the researcher was alert to the dangers of leading conversations and sought always to develop any point of interest, not just those that could be seen as contributing to the overall aim of the research.

Reflexivity is also crucial in the analysis of data and presentation of findings. Again, as the research was not setting out to prove a point, but intended to investigate phenomena, the same cautions were exercised. As King and Horrocks (2010; p.128) conclude, 'reflexivity is a critical approach that both reveals and opens up for scrutiny the underlying beliefs and ideologies that formulate and drive the research'. This approach will be further discussed throughout chapters 4, 5 and 6 as the analysis of data and findings are presented and discussed.

As the course leader for the student participants and as the research was located within a course/institution that was to award them a degree and QTS, it would be naive to ignore the existence of power relationships and the possibility that they may influence the research. In this research process there was a distribution of power and status, between me and the students. This was also the case, to an extent, between the ITE leader and me, but this time the opposite direction, as she holds a higher position than I do, within ITE. In this regard, it is almost impossible to escape the situation where researcher-participant relationships are 'structured by

inequalities' (Gough and Findlay 2003; p.23). I consciously aimed to *not* use my higher power/status, being explicit with participants that they were free to express their views, no matter what they were. However, to pay lip service to the power dimensions would be disingenuous. Gough and Findlay (2003) argue that that such insincerity would arise if a researcher assumed a 'fixed and knowable subject position' (p.17) and that a reflexivity that reveals or allows no conflicting views can disguise inequalities. So, the reflexive approach allowed a conscious awareness of the influence of these potential power relationships; this allowed the social-constructionism described earlier in the chapter. Indeed, the reflexive approach has merits, in that it situates the researcher both in relation to their participants and the social world they are studying (Brooks 2014).

The chapter now focuses on a discussion of the trustworthiness of the research project.

### **3.5 Trustworthiness of the research**

Trustworthiness is about a researcher being confident about and able to persuade his/her audience that their research findings are worth paying attention to and taking account of (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The traditional requirements typically involve considering internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Savin-Baden 2013). Internal validity addresses whether the research tool measured what it is meant to, within the context of the study and whether the explanations are sustained by the data; external validity is a consideration of the same if applied to different contexts (Opie 2004; Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). Reliability is a consideration of whether the research approach would give consistent results, if applied in a different setting by different researchers (Opie 2004; Toma 2011). Objectivity is a consideration of the extent to which research is unbiased allowing

only one interpretation from its data (Punch 2010). These traditional measures, however, better reflect a positivist rather than interpretivist theoretical base. The qualitative researcher has 'no golden key to validity' (Silvermann 2000; p.275). Lincoln and Guba (1985), question whether these traditional measures are appropriate, when a research paradigm is based on an ontology of multiple, constructed realities, an epistemology based on the interaction of the researcher and participants and where all the entities concerned are in a state of 'mutual shaping' (p.37). Their argument is to replace the conventional criteria, with four different criteria that better fit the interactive epistemology. These four criteria, that form the basis of establishing the trustworthiness of this project, are credibility (instead of internal validity), transferability (instead of external validity), dependability (instead of reliability) and confirmability (instead of objectivity (Guba, 1981; Lincoln and Guba 1985). These are addressed, in turn, below.

### **3.5.1 Credibility**

Credibility can be seen to have been established if the descriptions of the case and the interpretations and constructions of the researcher are seen as accurate (Toma 2011). Lincoln and Guba highlight a set of strategies to ensure credibility of research.

The strategies used in this research are summarised in figure 3, along with notes to show how they were implemented on this research:

**Figure 3: Strategies for establishing credibility of research (adapted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985 and Guba 1981)**

Strategy	Details	Application in this research projects
Prolonged engagement	Prolonged at one site. Researchers know the context and participants are used to the researchers.	Interviews conducted over a period of 6 years.  Interviews in the researcher's workplace.  Participants were well known to and working with the researcher outside of the research context.
Persistent observations	To identify the pervasive and atypical features, providing researcher insight into what is characteristic of the case under study.	Interviews conducted over a period of 6 years.
Triangulation	Using a variety of sources and perspectives to cross check data	Single and group interviews, questionnaires and observations.  Student participants and then followed up as qualified teachers  Additional non-student participants.
Peer debriefing	Testing ideas and opening oneself to questions as a researcher	Informal discussion with researcher colleagues.  Multiple conference presentations in the home university, the UK and abroad.
Member checking	Data and interpretations checked with members of groups from	This was not done as an on-going process but was done once draft findings were established.  This was done with non-participants from the same module group for 2017.

	which the data was collected.	
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This represents a clear outline of how the credibility of the research was established and will form the basis of that argument in the final chapter.

### **3.5.2 Transferability**

This is concerned with showing how the findings of the research can be transferred to a wider context (Shenton 2004). The issue of generalisation has already been discussed, establishing an argument as to why that is not the primary aim of this research and, within the social-constructionist epistemology, arguably should not be an aim. However, a degree of showing relevance to other contexts is appropriate (as has been argued) and to this end, the transferability of this research is based upon two strategies. First is the use of purposive sampling. Here, the intention was not simply to have a typical or representative sample, but to use one that maximises the information gathered. This in turn feeds into the strategy of 'thick descriptions' (Guba, 1981, Cresswell, 2012). This involves both the gathering of thick descriptive data and the making of thick descriptions afterwards, including, Guba would argue, the contextual factors impinging on the research. This allows comparison of the research context to other contexts to which the researcher may contemplate transfer of findings and conclusions (Guba 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

### **3.5.3 Dependability**

This is related to reliability. The traditional notion of reliability does not sit well in the epistemological and theoretical foundations outlined earlier in this chapter. If the research is built upon a constructionist epistemology and an interpretivist/phenomenological theory base, then the focus on constructed realities within a particular set of cases does not lend itself naturally to the notion of reliability,



which seeks to assess whether different researchers in different contexts would yield consistent results. To try to apply that within the overall framework of this chapter would not only make poor sense but would potentially deny the very epistemological and theoretical basis of the research.

Reliability involves showing, that if the research was to be done again, in the same way and in the same context, similar results would be obtained. Shenton (2004) argues that reporting the research processes clearly, address the issue of dependability directly, as a future researcher would be able to repeat the work, which may or may not yield the same results. The 'research design may be viewed as a prototype model' (Shenton 2004; p. 71).

### **3.5.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability is related to objectivity and the argument already made, defending the subjective nature of this research, will not be repeated here. Confirmability is seen as more appropriate for such qualitative, interpretivist research outlined in this chapter. Interpretation, by its very nature, requires at least some degree of subjectivity on the part of the researcher, who is gathering data from participants, who in this case are being studied using subjective research approaches and strategies. Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify two key strategies to ensure the confirmability of research; triangulation and the practice of reflexivity. Triangulation has already been discussed under 'credibility' (figure 3), the idea being, in the context of confirmability, that the use of a range of data sources and perspectives increases the objectivity and potentially reduces any negative impacts of subjectivity, such as researcher bias. This still allows the inherently subjective nature of the research to flourish, for example in the construction of meaning. The practice of reflexivity has been discussed and will be returned to in the final chapter. Suffice to say in the

context of confirmability, Guba (1981) argues that such practice reveals the underlying epistemological assumptions that drive the gathering, analysis and interpretation of data and the presentation of findings. Engaging clearly in this reflexivity, allows the research audience to judge the confirmability of the research, as the subjectivity has been made clear.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has set out, using the analytical strata of Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005), the epistemology, the theory, the approach and the strategy on which this research project is based. The additional discussion of ethical issues and the practicalities of the research and the final discussion establishing the basis of the research's trustworthiness, now lead into the analytical chapters, that present the findings of the research and the interpretation and discussion of those findings.

## Chapter 4: The struggle for creativity: antagonistic opposition

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### Introduction

The theme of this first set of participants within my case study is “the struggle for creativity” but with a focus on situations of antagonistic opposition between creativity and performativity. It focusses on a set of participant student teachers from my own Primary Education programme. Interviews were conducted near the end of their course as trainee teachers and at later stages in their careers as qualified teachers. My purpose is to provide evidence of their views and experiences of creativity in ITE and schools, within a performative climate. The findings presented in this chapter suggest that the participants struggled with the tensions that arise between creativity and performativity in school and in ITE. The chapter will build upon the theoretical discussions of chapter 2. For each participant, key findings will be presented and discussed in the light of the theoretical framework.

As explained in chapter 3, the findings from the participants (Simon and Sarah) are built upon data from two sources. Firstly, for each, separately, an interview was conducted during or shortly after their final course school placement. Secondly, a follow-up email interview in 2018 was completed, almost two years into his career for Simon and one year for Sarah. Where the interviews took place during final placements (Simon), they were immediately after a one-hour lesson observation. Sarah’s interview was conducted shortly after the school placement finished. In each case, the interview sought to focus on how each participant worked out, in their professional practice, their ideas of creativity, explored in their university course module *Creativity in Primary Education* and how they perceived and addressed any tensions between creativity and performativity.

The first participant in this chapter is Simon.

## **4.1 Simon**

Simon studied Primary Education between September 2013 and June 2016. He took up his first primary school teaching post in September 2016. His interview was conducted during his final placement in March 2016. His follow up email interview was completed in May 2018 by which time he had been teaching full time for almost 2 years. As explained in chapter 2, for Simon there was also a short interview in July 2018, arising from his request to talk about his current school situation.

### **4.1.1 Individual interview findings**

As discussed in chapter 3, individual interviews were analysed thematically by processes of coding. Initial memos were made, tagging data with content themes. Several revisits to the interview transcript developed and refined these into a first order set of core codes. In this process, some themes were split into sub themes, some were conflated, if very similar. Further refinement developed these into a second order set of themes which was more a process of theme conflation. As discussed in chapter 2, there is a sense that this can be reductive, but it provides a structure to make sense of and engage with a large amount of qualitative data. The final stage of this process suggested four broad themes arising from his face to face interview. The first was Simon's view on creativity and the second was his reflections on creativity in practice. The third theme was creativity and performativity and the fourth was teacher freedom and agency. Each theme will now be discussed. To begin, the first two themes will be addressed together as they interrelate.

#### **4.1.1.1 Themes 1 and 2: Simon's reflections on creativity *and* Creativity in practice**

The lesson, when Simon was observed teaching prior to the interview, was a PE lesson focussing on netball passing skills. Simon was clear from the outset of the interview that much of his perception about creativity revolved around a focus on processes above outcomes, thinking differently to the norm and problem solving. He said:

My definition [of creativity] it's a lot about the process and also about being able to think differently, so with the passing it was sort of getting them to think about what different ways could we do this instead of telling them the different ways, they can think themselves about the different methods and the different processes in which they can do. (Transcript section 2)

He was also clear, that a key part of his creative approach to teaching and learning was to help children to think differently and solve problems in one context, using those abilities in other learning situations as well; he saw creativity as transferable across learning contexts (transcript section 2).

I wanted to concentrate on passing [PE] because in the classroom, especially in maths we've been thinking about the different ways in which we can work out problems, different ways of overcoming a problem. So that's sort of the way it links in the PE aspect of getting them to think about different ways they can do things, and if they can think like that it's sort of, it links to problem solving, so being able to look at a problem and think 'right, how can we do this differently?

A key part of this for Simon was to engage the pupils explicitly in discussion about what being creative meant. In the lesson of netball passing skills:

I wanted them to think about it but what I didn't want to do was harm that divergent thinking, I didn't want to tell them the ways to do it, I wanted them to explore the different ways, which is why I gave it quite a free reign on what they were doing, so when I was saying 'what ways could we be creative, how could you pass it creatively?' (Transcript section 4)

In having these discussions, Simon was trying to help the children to identify a range of possibilities within PE, but also to extend that thinking into areas such as mathematical problem solving. A phrase that recurs several times in the interview was 'revert(ing) to type'. Initially this was in the context of sport (Simon was a very proficient, varsity level hockey player) and had negative connotations; 'they want to be safe' (transcript section 6). Simon at some length, articulates a parallel view of creativity in hockey. Essentially, creativity occurs where a wider range of alternatives allows a player to make creative decisions in the moment (transcript sections 18) to enhance their play:

A great example is on Saturday in our game, someone threw an aerial pass over and it was a pass no-one else saw and it went straight to somebody, it was just a brilliant pass that nobody else saw, so maybe it was something different. (Transcript section 8)

The parallel that Simon was drawing to his practice in school, was the importance of encouraging children to think differently and not 'revert to type' in a range of learning contexts. The phrase 'revert to type' has resonance with Bourdieu's habitus discussed in chapter 2; the habitual tendency, the disposition to think and act in certain ways according to our social context. Bourdieu's ideas that the habitus often becomes internalised and the influences are exerted often subconsciously (Bourdieu 1977; 1984; 1991), can be seen here, even in the micro context of a single PE lesson. Only by breaking from the 'safety' of a well-established passing technique, was the individual able to use the far more effective, creative aerial pass. We are beginning to see in Simon's responses, early indications of his view, that to break from the norm in thinking and practice, to take risks, was a key part of his own ideas about creativity.

Simon also reflected on wider views of creativity. In his placement setting, both the teachers and the pupils tended to view creativity as something lying mostly within the

arts (transcript section 9, 10). Challenging such views was seen as difficult within the timescale of a placement and the expectation of the curriculum, where the focus areas of mathematics and English were not seen by the school, as creative subjects. Reflecting forwards to the prospect of having his own class as an NQT, Simon highlighted the kinds of things that he would use in his own class where he had more freedom, to support the kind of thinking and creativity he had been discussing. The idea of 'growth mind-set' (Dweck 2012) was 'massive' (transcript section 14 and 52). This was not something we had discussed in our Creativity module. Other approaches that he wanted to develop included problem solving, risk taking, pupil freedom and valuing process over outcome:

[he tells the pupils] I'm not that bothered about the end result, I'm bothered about how you get there, what's the process of how you get there, what are you doing?' I use words like 'prove it', 'justify to me what you're doing, what you're actually thinking about', ... to try and create a safe environment when taking risks and getting things wrong is okay, ... having that ability to look at challenges and think 'right this is a challenge I'm going to face, I'm going to give it my best go and see if I can do anything differently to last time', that's what I want to try and do. (Transcript section 14).

The notion of 'value' in definitions of creativity is common (e.g. NACCCE 1999; Wyse and Dowson 2009; Sawyer 2014; Sternberg and Sternberg 2017). What Simon was articulating, was a value assigned to pupils' processes rather than the more tangible products or outcomes. In articulating the importance of allowing pupil freedoms he said:

when we describe something to children that's when creativity is hindered and stunted, but when we allow for those open-ended activities where children are allowed to explore, they're allowed to open their eyes ... but not being afraid to make a mistake, being allowed to grow in a sense in themselves, not by someone else telling them what to do, I think that's where creativity flourishes. (Transcript section 52).

Such freedom does not always come easily. Whilst Simon had a clear picture of where he wanted to be, he immediately reflected on the problems within that current placement. He had limited success with promoting pupil freedom in a class that was not his own, because, despite his efforts, 'still so many children are worried about getting things wrong.' (transcript section 14). Simon was asked, how he would demonstrate the value of these creative approaches. He pointed, for example, to different ways of recording children's work and giving choice and freedom in their learning:

I think loads of stuff can be done with videos, so recording what they children are saying, I think if we can get this kind of open-ended situations where the children have to make their own decisions, and once they've got out of that fear of failure, the fear of just getting one right answer, I think that becomes much easier. (Transcript section 44)

He provided a specific example for the observed PE lesson:

Where the children were able to show me something creative and then when they were designing their own games they had to use their, sort of use some of their prior knowledge to think of a new game that they made, so they create something different, and especially with the passes, taking on different ideas and expanding upon them in their own way because it's new to them, it's creative to them. (Transcript section 54)

As seen earlier (transcript section 2) he was keen to see this view of creativity applying across subjects; if children were given choice and freedom in PE and built the confidence to use this productively, it could influence their learning in other areas e.g. mathematics.

He also reflected on how he had not felt able to use such approaches fully on placement for two reasons. Firstly, they did not always fit the structures of the school such as rigid timetables and pre-set plans.



Because we're doing explanation writing in English, I couldn't do anything apart from that, it had to be linked to the topic of bread... so I was very limited there. I wanted to bring a bit of Shakespeare, but I wasn't allowed to bring any Shakespeare into it. I enjoy going through Shakespeare and saying 'what do we think this means? Okay how can we represent this? What might be happening in this scene? How might people be feeling?' Because then they're thinking about emotions, empathy. (Transcript section 48)

Simon wanted to reflect in his teaching, what for him, were some of the key elements of a creative approach. However, he was not allowed to as a student teacher, as the learning had to conform to a set structure.

Secondly, as a student teacher, where he wanted to try new things, at times the performatively driven need to demonstrate his abilities caused him to 'revert back to my safety net of doing things safely that I think I can show' (transcript section 48).

This leads onto a discussion of some of the constraints and tension that Simon experienced between creativity and performativity.

#### **4.1.1.2 Theme 3: creativity and performativity**

In the previous section, we saw how Simon wanted to develop an environment where creative thinking, 'growth mind-set' and mistakes were 'safe' for pupils but was working against an environment where creativity was seen as marginalised to a few subjects. There was a clear performative agenda, as the school climate was one that prioritised outcomes that were measurable. He saw this as especially problematic in the context of risk taking and prioritising process over outcome. As Simon put it (transcript section 24):

The problem is it's less measurable to concentrate on the process ... if they're [pupils] not showing it because they're doing the process mentally, or they're doing their processing in a group I can't then put it into their books, then I'm going to get called up as a teacher ...where's all your evidence of your lessons, where's that gone?', so it's the accountability factor comes in.

For Simon there is a tension here; he had a clear idea of the approach to learning and teachings that he wanted to take, but the accountability stance of the school was, at least to an extent, at odds with that, as physical evidence of a certain type of learning was prioritised.

Developing this theme, Simon discussed balancing performative expectations and creative approaches. Across transcript sections 15-20, Simon returned to the theme of 'reverting to type' and playing safe. Using the sports context again (as that was the observed lesson) he talked about how in sport, a tendency is to use 'drills' to develop basic skills. However, he reflects that 'it's not related to actually how they're going to be playing, I think it sort of regiments people's style and prevents flare' (transcript section 16). However, when asked how he would justify, in a performative climate, the kinds of more open, process based and risk-taking approaches he had been discussing, he argued that in effective sport, a whole range of unexpected moves arise. He saw these as developing from basic skills but flourishing where people were not scared to take risks; the risks of losing a game. He was clear about the parallels here between sport and the everyday classroom

But if we concentrate on the process and the children then do the process, the outcome is sorted out itself ... would the process not sort out the outcome if we concentrated more on the process?  
(Transcript section 20)

Simon developed this argument in the context of his netball lesson. He was asked about balancing any tensions between wanting to develop his pupils' creativity and more 'hard-nosed' agendas of sports performance. Specifically, some boys were passing using a bounce; this is not allowed in netball. Simon was asked why he did not intervene in this. He was clear that he was building the kind of openness in his classroom that promoted creativity in his pupils:

If I just intervened and told them [the bounce pass was not proper netball], I don't want them to become disengaged because I'm telling them they're wrong, I wanted them to do it themselves and then to see themselves and question it and say 'are we allowed to do that in netball? No, we're not.' 'Okay so how could we change it so we can?' Because they're still practicing, they're still practicing the essence of a pass and a catch, but if I suddenly told them that's wrong then that stumps that, I'm undermining my whole philosophy there. (Transcript section 60)

With this and other examples (transcript section 64), Simon was articulating his view that to promote creativity, process had to be more important than outcome. The core of his (passionate) argument was, that when a focus is on measurable outcomes, teachers tend to revert to type, teaching in a way that produces physical outcomes, because they are pressured to be accountable. That accountability is carried out by examination of physical outcomes (Foucault 1979) and the associated judgements become means of control (Ball 2013). Therefore, it is arguable, that the kind of open, creative approaches that Simon wished to pursue were limited by his lack of freedom and agency. When asked about tensions between creativity and performativity (I used the word performativity first) he said:

I would say it's not just performativity though, I think it's accountability as well. Creativity against performativity and accountability I think, because that's what stops the teachers taking those [creative] methods or approaches. (Transcript section 66)

However, he is also clear that his wish to pursue his less conventional approaches was not, in his view, compromising performatively measured outcomes, but was an effective route to raising standards. As he said:

the way I've been teaching the children, I think they've come on a lot ... it is a way of achieving it and there's actual evidence of it because in them, they have monitoring assessments, so it's 40 questions, maths questions related to the objectives that we've been teaching, and I compared the ones from last time to this time and the ones I've been teaching, where they got them wrong last time, they got them right. But I've not been doing it in the prescribed way, I've been doing it in an amended way. (Transcript section 72)

However, the problem persisted in terms of the concrete evidence of pupil progress that the school wanted. Through transcript sections 25-32 Simon described lessons where he has tried more open creative approaches, but was under pressure when lessons did not produce tangible outcomes:

I did a lesson on cracking a code and it was all problem solving, and we did it in groups so they didn't actually get it in their books, so they said 'where is your evidence for this lesson?' and I said 'we can't stick that in their books', so then for parents evening that lesson is missed, so I get it in the neck for trying to do, so that's where it falls apart because the system's so much about accountability now.  
(Transcript section 26)

Simon was clear (transcript sections 26-30) that such approaches made at least as much contribution to the development of good learning and progress in his pupils, as did 'reverting to type'. For Simon, the issue was not that such creative approaches were at odds with performative expectations. Where the tension lies, was in the pressure from senior leaders to *prove* that progress, in what would appear to be a rather narrow, preconceived fashion. There was a real sense of frustration and weariness in Simon, which for me was both surprising and unsettling, as he had been such an enthusiastic, positive student to this point. It is to be expected that a final school placement has its stresses. But Simon was not talking about workload, pupil behaviour, lesson planning etc. He was being brought down by the reality of the loss of his freedoms as a teacher; there is evidence here to suggest that Simon was not feeling free to teach as he wanted to, because of the expectations to prove pupil progress, by having them produce certain types of work. As Simon says (transcript section 32):

How do you prove that they are progressing, it's got to be shown, and I just feel it's very difficult and it causes more stress and it's so easy ... to revert to type as a teacher because it's safer and because you know it's [the expected evidence of pupils' work] going to be there, so we revert to the type of just doing the same old thing, the

same old teaching, the same old regimented way to drill these specific things into the children.

There is so much resonance here with the logic of performativity discussed in chapter 2 (Flint and Peim 2012; Clarke and Moore 2013). The idea of logic in this context is that it is accepted generally because it appears logical. What I would suggest is, that Simon's stress was not because he accepted the logic, but that he was rejecting it (to an extent) because it ran contrary to his own philosophy of teaching. As discussed in chapter 2, Ruti (2009; 2015) suggests that when we make sense of the world and its pressures in a way that makes sense to us, we can experience the 'art of living'. Ruti argues that this is not found in transcending or dominating our circumstances. It is not about avoiding them or allowing them to dominate us. It is about confronting them and living with them in a way that has meaning for the individual. What Simon would appear to be experiencing, was stress, caused, not by the expectation that pupils make good progress - that is a given for which we prepare our student teachers. For Simon, the pressure was being created by the performative 'logic', that such pupil progress had to be evidenced in narrow, concrete ways, to satisfy the expectations of the accountability regime. What was causing his stress, was the extent to which this ran contrary to his beliefs. He was struggling to work within the accountability regime in a way that had meaning for him. Such accountability approaches use judgements and comparisons to affect control and change (Ball 2013). That perceived lack of freedom was summed up by Simon:

I think it's so hard as a teacher to say 'you know what, I'm going to take this risk, I'm going to do it', which is where I'm saying that for creativity I think that is lost in Year 2 and Year 6 [statutory assessment years] because they need their children to be able to pass these tests and its performance dependent now which adds to the stress of it, so it's just more pressure on the teachers so it's easier for them to do the same old things, to follow schemes that

work and then get the learning objectives met. (Transcript section 32).

Simon also reflected on the driving force behind all this. The school was 'going for outstanding' (Ofsted inspection grade; transcript section 38). There appears to have been an explicit drive from the school leadership, on raising pupil attainment and progress data, because it would be a key indicator in their next Ofsted inspection.

They're going for 'outstanding' so it's all on grades ... so that's why they're drilling it because they know that if they get their grades up it's easier to get outstanding school. (Transcript section 38)

Even as a student teacher, Simon was experiencing the pressures of performative accountability, at the whole school level, filtering down to those pressures at class level. The panopticon metaphor (Foucault 1979; 1980) applied to Ofsted has been discussed in chapter 2. This is a concrete example, where the pressures of surveillance determine behaviours that are seen to be right and logical. This is not a criticism aimed at these specific school leaders. It is perhaps inevitable that anyone - me included - who works in an institution where neoliberal performative agendas are forefronted, are at least susceptible to behaviour of this kind.

Before the interview, we had been talking and Simon had described how he was coming to regard championing creativity and resisting performativity, as a losing battle. I said (transcript section 39)

So, before we actually started recording, we kicked around this idea of someone's creativity versus performativity and that kind of battle, you described it as a losing battle, you've since described it as a lost battle.

Simon said (transcript sections 40):

It is and it's so depressing. I was sat the other day thinking 'what am I going to do if my ideologies are questioned through the whole system that we're going into?', and I think the problem is that it's an accountability nightmare because teachers have to show, teachers

have to show that they're teaching the children through this progression, and they're so pressured, especially in this school, year 6 and year 2 are so stressed to get the children where they want, and it's becoming very regimented.

Whilst the use of quantifiable data as a proxy for quality and standards is ubiquitous in the English primary school system, it is a practice that Ball (2003) rejects. The counter view to the 'logic' of performative use of such data, is that is reductionist, simplifying and missing the complexities of what they claim to represent (Clarke 2013b; Maisuria 2016).

It is clear from Simon's interview, that even before he qualified, he was experiencing challenges to his beliefs as a teacher and his agency to practice as he wanted to. For such a young (and level-headed) teacher not even at the start of his career, to be using such words and phrases as 'depressing', 'accountability nightmare' and 'my ideologies are questioned through the whole system' is concerning. It would seem symptomatic of the growing crisis in teaching where early career retention of teachers (still in teaching after three years) has dropped from 80% in 2011 to 73% in 2017 and the five-year rate has dropped from 73% in 2011 to 67% in 2017 (Worth 2018).

In the later stages of his interview we picked up on the idea of a battle or struggle between creativity and performativity. Through transcript sections 67-72 Simon reflected that these two elements, whilst often in tension, in his view do not have to be. He acknowledged and valued the benefits of pupil assessment and knowledge of their strengths, capabilities, weakness and progress. The issue for Simon lay in the balance between the two elements:

I think if we...with the performativity and accountability, that becomes too heavy and we're too concerned about that, that's where people revert to type and it kills the creativity. (Transcript section 68)

In this regard, there is resonance with the views of Robinson (2001; 2006; 2015; 2017) who argues that forms of schooling focussed on outmoded approaches to and emphases on assessment, are in danger of killing creativity. However, Simon goes on to reflect on his own practice (transcript section 72), arguing, with supporting assessment data, that his creative approaches e.g. in mathematics, have produced the results wanted by the school. For Simon, creativity or performativity does not necessarily have to be a binary choice. However, where schools prioritise what he sees as an imbalance towards performativity and accountability, then creativity is stifled, teachers are stressed and pressured into forms of teaching that will deliver the results wanted and, crucially, the tangible evidence required by senior leaders.

This leads us on to the final theme, exploring Simon's sense of creative freedom and agency as a teacher.

#### **4.1.1.3 Theme 4: teacher freedom and agency**

The preceding section flags up that Simon experienced a significant loss of his sense of freedom and agency as a teacher during his final placement. What has been clear already, is that freedoms (e.g. in pedagogical decisions, in children making choices, in taking risk with approaches to learning and teaching) are key to Simon's conceptualisation of creativity in his professional context e.g. transcript sections 60, 62, 64. Simon was asked about his level of optimism in these final stages of his QTS course:

If I'm going to be brutally honest, probably less optimistic; I've had nights where I've been so frustrated by the constraints of what we've got to do, and what I've got to meet. I feel like...I feel very demoralised sometimes with what I'm trying to do but can't do it because of the accountability. (Transcript section 73, 74)



This paints a stark picture of an emerging NQT, who has experienced a significant loss of creative agency and he is clear where the blame lies for him. He remains however, determined, to a point, when he was asked about giving up. His response (transcript section 76):

I would say no, no matter how hard it is you've just got to keep on going and make the inroads and achieve what we know is best for children.

Simon was an enthusiastic and positive student teacher who was at the end of his final placement and had at this point received his summative grade of 'outstanding'. He had, for the QTS element of education, achieved the highest performative measure. Simon was asked a question that was posed to me in the same context of performative pressures: can you envisage a point where these pressures would make you walk away completely from your job? (transcript section 77). Bearing in mind his own high performative outcomes, his response was quite stark:

Unfortunately, over the past 2 weeks I can envisage that point because even though I've been told I'm an outstanding teacher, the paperwork side of it and just accountability side of it is dragging me down. (Transcript section 78)

He went on to say he would not want to walk away but would want to try and change things. There is however an interesting juxtaposition. On the one hand, there is a student who has, from a performative, reductive perspective (graded as outstanding against the DfE 2012 Teacher Standards) shown himself to be at the peak of his professional capability. However, on the other hand, he is in a position, where he can already envisage how the pressures of performativity and accountability would make him leave the very job he has worked so hard to reach and which he has not yet started fully. This juxtaposition could, on the face of it, be seen as worrying but also as encouraging. Simon does not appear content to assume that because he was

graded as 'outstanding', the performatively driven approaches that he was, to an extent, pressured into, are the best.

The issue of the performative pressure from university ITE (my role, as it were) was raised. Did Simon feel pressured on his final placement to do things in a different way in order to be graded as good or outstanding? It is interesting to note that Simon used the same phrase - reverting to type - that he used when discussing a teacher's role in showing pupil progress in learning, but now applied to *his* showing progress in *his* journey to QTS.

You can be graded outstanding by reverting to type and getting a lesson out ... I could still get graded outstanding by doing a lesson which showed that [all pupils make progress], I think that's a tricky question.

What Simon is articulating is a 'safe' response to performative pressures: teach a lesson that can easily show that all of the pupils have made good progress towards the learning outcomes of the lesson, and the positive grading of the teacher follows. Whilst this is a simplification of reality, it is indicative of a particular attitude that says, when being judged/appraised, it is best to play safe. However, Simon's positivity still came through, as he was not satisfied with that:

Let's take that netball lesson [the observed lesson]; I could have done pass the ball to each other, and then go into a game, bog standard but it would have shown all children can pass the ball, but my ideology in sport, I don't want 30 children to do the same thing, to do the same pass and then take that into a normal game where they're not actually being challenged to think differently. (Transcript section 80)

Simon went on to articulate how his final placement had been influenced by his studies on the final year creativity module. He flagged up the development of his thinking and practice, especially in helping children to develop more open ended,

divergent thinking. Crucially he compared his second (SE2) and final placements (transcript section 86):

in SE2 that's what I did a bit, all singing all dancing lessons, but at the end of the day is that just for me to show off my creativity rather than at the end of the day, what do we want? We want the children to be creative ... so that's how I changed, from the input we've had [creativity module] and thinking 'how am I actually going to get the children to be creative?

Simon appears to show some genuine level of unselfishness as a teacher here. He shows that attitude further, wrapped up in an implicit frustration at performativity and its struggle/battle with creativity (transcript section 86):

At the end of the day it's not about us, it's for them [the pupils], and again I think that comes into the battle; what is it for, is it for the teachers? Those appraisals that we're doing, the observations you get, performance management. Is that to hold the teacher accountable, or are we looking at how we can further the children? I think that comes into the battle as well.

The interview finished on this same unselfish, but somewhat pessimistic note, when asked if that performativity/creativity battle was worth waging. Simon responded:

Yeah, not for the teachers, for the children, because that is what education should be for, and I think the system we have is slightly away from that, it's not for children, it's for the league tables.  
(Transcript section 88)

This suggests that Simon, at this point near the end of his QTS course, was keen to be optimistic, but struggling to maintain that in the face of the performative accountability pressures that he had experienced.

Attention now turns to Simon's short email interview, completed by all participants in May 2018, by which time he had been teaching for almost two years as qualified teacher.

#### **4.1.2 Findings from Simon's email interview**

In this section, evidence from Simon's email interview responses will be presented. Parallels will be drawn to the more detailed face to face interview evidence, already presented, from his time as final year student. This will provide evidence as to extent to which his views, practices, and sense of creative agency have endured, strengthened or diminished during two years as a qualified class teacher.

Simon was asked what factors helped and hindered him in approaching teaching and learning in his own creative way, in his current school, two years on from qualifying. Simon identified his own developing views on creativity and the needs of the children as key factors that helped; he highlighted the views of senior leaders, the general ethos of the school and lesson appraisals as the most influential factors that hindered his creative approaches. Simon was showing signs of the pressure that he was feeling, two years into his teaching career:

Due to the ethos at the school, I feel my creativity has been limited and hindered during my time teaching at the school. I feel my own developing views and reading are what keep my creativity alive.

Simon was asked about the broad creative approaches he now used as a teacher.

The key elements were similar to when he was on his final placement, as discussed earlier:

I try to think about my end product - what is it that I want the children to achieve. I then think about what would be an engaging and creative way to achieve this. My thinking then goes towards the hook and what I can use to gain the children's interest.

He was still focussing on creative ways to accomplish an end rather than following set approaches. Asked to define creativity in his own way now (his 'active definition' of creativity that he said was still influential in his practice) Simon responded:

Creativity is the need to instil children with their own ways of thinking and learning, enabling them to take an item or idea and turn it into something new and exciting.

This apparently positive, agentic response was, however preceded by a rather bleak caveat:

After being in the profession for two years, I feel that creativity in teaching is dependent on the setting, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and ethos of the school you are placed at. In addition, if your class has specific needs and targets, creative thinking can be completely thrown out of the window in order to 'train' children towards their SATs.

This response and his use of the word 'train', links back to the discussion of Foucauldian notions of power and discipline. As will be suggested, as further data from Simon is explored, he was, two years into his teaching career, feeling the pressure to conform to a prescribed way of thinking and working; a school habitus (Bourdieu 1991; Green 2013; Jones and Bradbury 2018). That pressure and control was being exercised by the senior leadership team through their expectation and accountability measures (Ball and Olmedo 2013).

As will be seen in chapter 5, these views and experiences contrast strongly with other former students, who were working in schools where the ethos and leadership of the school was more open to creative approaches, whilst being subject to the same performative accountabilities.

Simon was asked about his creative freedom as a teacher now. He was clear about the impact of performatively driven accountability measures on that sense of freedom. He talked about the pressures he had experienced since starting his teaching career:

I went into education with a view that I could change the way children think, empowering them to be their own learning and giving them a love and passion for exploring new ideas and concepts. Through book scrutinies, planning scrutinies, lessons observations,

learning walks, teacher coaching, my ability to take risks in teaching and approach things in a creative way have been stripped away. My confidence in my own teaching has been hindered and I now no longer have the sense of purpose I had two years previous to starting.

There are three significant elements here. First the sense of agency and optimism that Simon felt as he embarked on his career. Although not a formal part of data collection, I had a clear picture of this from talking with Simon after he was offered his first job. To say he was optimistic and excited by the creative possibilities of his future role would be understatement. Second, is the systematic, but far from unusual (from my long and wide experience in primary education) use of monitoring strategies, premised on school improvement and accountability. This is the very embodiment of Foucault's notions of power and disciplinary training; the 'normalising gaze' (1979, p.184). Third (and most significant) is the stripping away of Simon's creative agency, confidence to make professional choices as a teacher and his very 'sense of purpose' with which he left his QTS course. This suggests a very real sense of conflict and tension for Simon in his sense of agency and creative freedom.

He is clear about the kind of creative teacher he wants to be, whilst simultaneously being clear that he does not feel free to be that teacher. Simon went on:

If the school you teach at does not want you to teach with the creative approaches and you do not have the time and space to approach teaching in a creative capacity, you are at risk of falling behind with your expectations. This question may include, 'with putting your job security at risk', if you are not in line with the SLT's requirements and guidelines'.

Simon's response here suggests an incompatibility in his experience, not only between creativity and performativity, but also between creativity and keeping his job. In stark contrast to the participants that will be seen in chapter 5, there is evidence here that suggests that Simon, two years into his career, sees creativity or performativity as a binary choice, in his current school setting. On his final placement

Simon was beginning to experience this, but two years on, this would appear to be a stark reality for him in his current setting; his sense of creative agency would appear almost shattered.

It is all the more saddening, when Simon still argued that 'creative agency' was important as a teacher. He explained this view by saying

Teachers MUST [Simon's emphasis] have a sense of creative agency, a sense of empowerment to their teaching ... Teachers with their own sense of thinking towards teaching will expand their knowledge of different approaches and be able to see more clearly what will and won't work. However, teachers need strong and risk-taking leaders who are open to teachers exploring and experimenting with creative ways.

What is clear again, is the pivotal role of the school leadership in disempowering Simon's sense of agency. For Simon, in this context, his sense of agency could not flourish in the way that he wanted or expected it to. This will be discussed further in the concluding discussion in chapter 7.

It is at this point that we turn to an additional piece of data. As explained briefly in chapter 2, when Simon had made his email interview response, he contacted me by separately and shortly afterwards, by email asking if we could meet (his school was local). He wanted to explain his negative responses. This was completely unsolicited. I met with Simon in July 2018, two months after his email interview. We talked at length and I recorded a short formal interview to capture a summary of our discussion. Simon revealed, that what he saw as the negative responses in his email interview, reflected his decision to leave teaching at the end of his second year i.e. two months after the email interview and two weeks after this additional interview. He intended to travel extensively and had no fixed plans about returning to the profession ('At the minute it's 50/50 whether I come back.' Transcript section 18). What had led him to this clearly difficult decision? He was very clear, that he

had experienced not only the pressures of pupil attainment data but, in his school, significant prescription:

‘the ways in which the senior leaders want that done with prescribing handbooks of ‘this is how we teach’ and a teaching palette of how we deliver subjects.’ (transcript section 2).

Simon was clear, that he was only reflecting on his own experience, but it was nonetheless a stark reflection:

over the last two years ... it’s definitely completely killed my enthusiasm and ability to think creatively and how I can do certain things because I’m always reflecting back on ‘Oo – would they [SLT] like this? Can I do it this way? Is it OK to do this? Or being told you don’t do it this way, you should do it that way. (Transcript section 4)

Simon was clear that this had been a major factor in his decision saying

‘I’ve been demotivated, demoralised because I no longer feel like I have the freedom I did once have as a teacher. So, that’s a massive influence.’ (Transcript section 6)

Reflecting back to previous interview discussions about the struggle between creativity and performativity, Simon ‘updated’ his views:

In the school I’m in, I think it’s not even a struggle. I feel like performativity is the overwhelming factor and there’s no thought belong given to the process, over the outcome unfortunately. Especially with the year group I have been given [year 5] ... they need to be ready and trained for year 6 ready for their SATS ... It’s been “We need the results, we need X amount getting this percentage for next year, so you need to get them to that. (Transcript section 8)

Simon talked (transcript section 10) of his continued view that the struggle/battle for creativity cannot be won at year 6, and maybe year 5. In his own words

But when they get to year 5, going into year 6, the data seems to be the driver of what needs to be done and specific children... I have been told to leave specific children because they will never make what they need to make.



Asked whether these prescribed methods were the best way to achieve the desired result, he felt that in the short term, in terms of achieving the desired data outcomes, they potentially were (transcript section 14). However, asked if they were the best ways to *teach* (i.e. not simply to attain certain data results) Simon was clear:

No. I don't think there's any freedom, enjoyment, enthusiasm, passion going into it. It's teaching for a test. .... So, I feel, in the short term, 3 weeks before doing something [a test] then yes. But in the long term to instil in children that love of learning it's 100% not.  
(Transcript section 16)

This underlines Holloway's (2018) arguments about how contemporary education operates to prioritise 'high stakes evaluation' (p.1) based on surveillance and audit. It also echoes the characterisation by Coffield and Williamson (2011) of schools as 'exam factories'.

Simon was asked about what would need to be different, for him to return to teaching. Again, he was clear that the extent of freedom afforded by the school leadership 'would be the thing that would sway it if I was going to come back into teaching' (transcript section 18).

Simon's concluding comment in this short interview was in response to being asked if he felt professionally trusted:

No. I don't feel I have the trust and, well, gratitude for working hard. I don't feel I'm trusted to go off and explore things. I feel like that has given me that negative mind-set and that loss of confidence in myself as a professional. (Transcript section 20)

Having known Simon through his Primary Education course, this was indeed a very sad "epitaph", at least for now, for a career on which he embarked with such enthusiasm and positivity.

#### **4.1.3 Summary of findings: Simon**

Combining the analysis of the data from Simon's interviews, there is evidence to suggest that Simon showed an initial growing sense of creative agency which influenced his creative practice and a passion for creativity. However, the passion and desire to see creative practice flourish has met with considerable tension and challenge in performative school climates. He has been prepared to work in ways that challenge established norms in developing his creative practice, but at times has felt less able to do that. As time has gone on, the accumulated pressures of a performative climate have had considerable negative impacts on his sense of creative agency, his freedom to practice and ultimately his career. Simon's sense of agency has declined over time, to the extent where pressures to conform to prescribed teaching practices and to deliver pupil attainment data have led him to leave, at least for now, the teaching profession. Despite this, his desire is to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate. Simon remains passionate about the importance of creativity in teaching and learning. Ultimately, it is that passion that has created the tensions between what he desires and what he had experienced. It is these tensions that have led him to a point where he has to see creativity and performativity as something of a binary choice. He appears to have not been able to make sense of his professional situation and the expectations placed upon him, in a way that makes sense for him. He has not been able, as a teacher, to experience the 'art of living' (Ruti 2009; 2016b).

Simon's sense of creative agency has been closely tied to the expectations of senior school leaders. Whilst, as will be seen, this is also true of some the case studies in chapter 5, but in a more positive context (e.g. Evelyn), for Simon the weight of expectation, control and prescription had ultimately been overwhelming, in an entirely negative sense. It is no exaggeration to say that Simon's experience typifies

the struggle between the terrors of performativity and the teacher's soul, discussed by Ball (2003). Whether this is more a matter of power being exercised, agentially, by leaders who believe they are acting in the right way or more a matter of 'terror and soul' struggles being passed down to class teacher by school leaders who themselves feel a lack of agency, will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter 7.

Attention now turn to the second case study participant of this chapter, Sarah.

## **4.2 Sarah**

Sarah studied Primary Education between September 2014 and June 2017. She took up her first primary school teaching post in September 2017. Her interview was conducted shortly after her final placement in March 2017. Her email interview was completed in May 2018, by which time she had been teaching full time for almost one year.

### **4.2.1 Individual interview findings**

Sarah's interview was analysed in the same way as Simon's (as discussed in section 4.1.1) to arrive at key themes. Analysis of Sarah's interview suggested three key themes. First was her reflections and views on creativity. Second, was her sense of creative agency and third was her reflections on creativity and performativity. Each theme will now be discussed.

#### **4.2.1.1 Theme 1: Sarah's reflections on creativity**

Sarah was interviewed shortly after the completion of her final placement.

Unfortunately, a school visit was not possible. It was Sarah's first time teaching Key Stage 1 (years 1 and 2 of English primary schools; pupils aged 5-7). This was not her preferred age range, and this had caused her some anxiety prior to the final

placement (SE3). Reflecting on this in terms of her creative practice, Sarah recognised that it had allowed her to bring more imagination and hands on learning into her teaching to engage her children (transcript sections 4 -8). Sarah elaborated on how these approaches represented her views on creativity. For Sarah, an important part of creativity was enabling the children to respond in these imaginative ways, so as to allow them some freedom for their own individual learning responses. She recounted a writing stimulus around a teddy that disappeared from a bag:

the children were just obviously so engaged because it had vanished from the bag and they were really engaged in that, and because of that excitement they were creating all these images in their head, and it just allowed them to be more creative in themselves.  
(Transcript section 12)

So, Sarah was articulating a degree of freedom and choice, through imagination, as an important element of her creative practice. There are clear links to perceptions of creativity discussed in chapter 2, especially with regards to imaginative activity (NACCCE 1999) and Vygotsky's social constructivist ideas on the development of creative imagination through children's play (Starko 2014). Sarah reflected that, whilst her perception had developed a lot over the course of the *Creativity in Primary Education* module leading up to her final school placement (SE3: September to December), her ideas after SE3 (March) were similar to those immediately before (transcript section 14). She was clear that originality was important for creativity. In terms of little c creativity (Craft 2005; Simonton 2018) she had come to see this in terms of adaptation of ideas rather than a universal, 'never been conceived of before', originality. For creativity at a larger level (Big C), this would involve absolute originality. As Sarah said in something of an interviewer/interviewee interplay discussing a lesson where children designed Easter eggs (transcript section 68; SC = Sarah; PR = me, the interviewer):

SC: I've taken that idea [Easier egg design] and I've changed it.

**PR: Does that not then make it, to an extent, original?**

SC: No, because like you said I've changed something, it's not original, it's based on something previous.

**PR: That's a pretty hard-core view on originality.**

SC: But...

**PR: Which is fine, I'm just...**

SC: But originality to me is the first time somebody invents something or does something, so...

**PR: So that would restrict creativity to a very, very small number of people?**

SC: Yeah.

**PR: So it's quite an elite thing.**

SC: To be creative in a social context, yes, you're looking at people like Einstein and those sort of creative people.

It is worth reflecting that whilst Sarah developed in her thinking about creativity across the creativity module, this was not an easy or unproblematic journey for her. She reflected that at the end of that module 'I wanted to pull my hair out' (transcript section 56). Sarah went on to explain (transcript section 57);

I kind of lost sight as to what creativity actually was; because there were so many definitions, I couldn't pinpoint what I then thought creativity was, because it seemed to conflict between person and person. So, in a sense, although my teaching side of creativity hadn't changed, I didn't then perceive myself as being creative because of that idea that I take other people's ideas and expand on them, which obviously according to some definitions isn't then being creative because it's not original.

The module focussed on exploring a range of perspectives from different fields of study (as seen in section 2.1 of chapter 2). Rather than finding this helpful, she had, at times, found it frustrating. The perspectives, especially from psychology (e.g. Sternberg and Sternberg 2017; Sawyer 2014; Gardner, 2008), that put a higher emphasis on notions of originality that extend beyond the individual, were problematic for Sarah; to her they denied that she could be seen as creative.

Her SE3 experiences led her to a more confident view that creativity was very much part of effective pedagogy. Her view was that her creative practice was 'to engage

the learner and empower the learner and promote that love of learning, I think that's where it's creative, effective pedagogy' (transcript section 67). It would seem, that for Sarah, the theoretical began to make sense to her, when she was actually teaching.

We now turn to the second theme, creativity and performativity, exploring how these two elements of Sarah's reality interrelate.

#### **4.2.1.2 Theme 2: creativity and performativity**

Early in the interview, when Sarah was talking about a specific example of her creative practice on SE3, she said (transcript section 14) 'the teacher kind of disregarded it for being something that you do as a student but not necessarily as a teacher, because you've not got time'. Sarah was clear about the values of that approach in terms of pupil engagement and the impact of that on their learning. The phrase 'not necessarily as a teacher because you've not got time' speaks volumes about a performative agenda and a view in some schools that creativity or a focus on measurable pupil attainment and progress may be something of a binary choice. Sarah compared her second and third year placements (SE2 and SE3 respectively). Despite some of the negativity of the class teacher on SE3, Sarah was given a good degree of freedom to approach her teaching in her own creative ways (transcript section 22). She contrasted that with SE2, in a year 5/6 class (ages 9-11) where the performative pressures were far higher:

On SE2 there was [restraint on practice] because I was in a 5/6 class, and my maths class was just year 6s and it was about boosting and filling the gaps in their knowledge to get them [up to standard]. So, after Easter it was literally just revision sessions. (Transcript section 22)

Sarah reflect how she started SE2 using a range of engaging and creative approaches to mathematics, but,

after the first week of us teaching with that approach, more creative approach, the maths leader asked us not to do that and to go back to worksheets because they needed just kind of, umm they just wanted them to learn the method that was going to be on the SATS test (Transcript section 24)

This is a very clear example of where the performative pressures on schools are translated into prescribed form of teaching; where the accountability agenda of a subject leader imposes a lack of creativity in learning and teaching because of a perception that the most important focus is test data. As Bibby (2018) argues, compliance is (or at least can be) the very opposite of living (or teaching) creatively. These compliances 'incur costs: costs to our creativity and costs to our experiencing of ourselves as worthy' Bibby 2018; p.102. There are parallels here with Simon's experiences in years 5 and 6.

Although Sarah acknowledged that SE3 was less constrained because of the younger age group, her experience was not immune from performative constraints.

Sarah reflected:

it's not the same pressure [as year 6] ... but there still was that pressure of trying to do more lessons to get the children to their expected standards. So, every Friday we actually did past papers with them... because in their assessments they weren't doing as well as they should have, so it was about teaching year 1s how to answer exam style questions... but it just, it did take the creativity out. (Transcript section 26)

This reflects Robert-Holmes' (2015) view that even in the earlier years of primary school, teaching is increasingly constrained by the expectations of achieving performative targets. Sarah did reflect how she tried to approach this in as an engaging and creative manner as she could. One example was written work, using props and the children's imaginations to stimulate their writing (transcript section12):

[The lesson] was a character description of the yeti, because we based it on Where the Wild Things Are, they were going to be the yetis. So, I had this little teddy and I had shrunk him down with magic power and had put him into my little magic bag ... we then discussed how we could use the yeti in our story. When I went back to get the yeti he'd gone missing so then it actually revolved around creating a missing poster for this yeti, the children were just obviously so engaged because it had vanished from the bag and they were really engaged in that, and because of that excitement they were creating all these images in their head, and it just allowed them to be more creative in themselves.

However, across two placements, even though there were variable levels of constraint on her creative practice, the limiting powers of performative expectations appear to be quite clear.

Sarah's final placement had a particular context in relation to performative demands, having been recognised as a top performing school in terms of statutory assessment data:

So when I found out about the school I went on and checked Ofsted, and that's when I heard that they're a top 2% [school], and it is intimidating to then go in as a student teacher, be expected to maintain that kind of level of progress that the children were making. (Transcript section 39)

For some schools, there will be performative pressures based on pupil attainment and progress which is deemed to be below expectation. For some, as in this case, being seen to be at or close to the 'top', can bring pressure of expectation to remain there, or climb higher. This reflects the marketisation of schooling especially in the wake of the 1988 Education Reform Act; the establishment of a national curriculum, its associated testing, the increasing focus on performance data and the growth of Ofsted. The datafication that has arisen from marketisation has resulted in school cultures of audit and focus on achieving the required attainment levels (Carlile 2018). The pressure to be at least 'good' (in Ofsted terms) is immense; anything less has become unthinkable in contemporary schooling discourse. This was seen when



Ofsted announced the removal of the pre 2012 'satisfactory' grading, replacing it with 'requires improvement'.

from today [3.9.12] a new grade 'requires improvement' replaces the 'satisfactory' grade. Satisfactory should never have been more than a staging post on a school's journey towards providing a good or outstanding education for all children. (Ofsted 2012)

From that, everyone wants to be at least 'good', preferably 'outstanding', the latter of which makes no more sense than all schools wanting to be above average in their pupil performance statistics. This pressure for continuous improvements in quality, as recognised in inspection gradings, is in tension with and potentially undermines notions such as excellence (Clarke 2018) as the performatively driven managerial focus, can impact greatly on teachers' freedom to practice. Even before going to this placement school, Sarah was beginning to feel some burden of performative expectation. How did this manifest itself in the school? Firstly (acknowledging that this is Sarah's view and not data collected directly in the school) the school have a 'real big push on getting children integrated' (transcript section 39). Sarah went on to explain this, as having a focus on set approaches designed to maximise pupil attainment of a form that can be measured, maintaining that top 2% standing. As Sarah reflected, this had a significant impact on the forms of teaching, which were dictated to quite an extent:

So a lot of their teaching approaches, they bought into a lot of schemes so they could focus more on the attainment of the children and the progress of the children, rather than the planning side of things ... everything was there for those, so they weren't necessarily being creative because they were just following those lesson plans that were there for them. (Transcript section 41)

I asked Sarah directly, whether, in her view, the drive to be or to remain somewhere at the 'top of the tree', was limiting creative teaching and learning in that setting.

Providing an example of mathematics, where a new scheme had been purchased,

she felt that the performative drive was limiting creativity, as the work was limited to the contexts and applications of those scheme textbooks (transcript section 51, 52). There is a correlation here with the impact of a school ethos and leadership, as seen in the previous participant, Simon. Whilst chapter 5 will discuss participants who experience greater agency, where school leadership promoted creativity, in the two participants of this chapter, there is evidence to suggest that the opposite can also hold, even when schools are deemed to be 'outstanding'. The panoptic lens of surveillance and monitoring (Foucault 1979) and its normalising effect (Hope 2013) is equally powerful in each instance, whether schools are below or well above average in terms of their statutory pupil attainment data.

An interesting element of the interview with Sarah, was discussing the role of performativity in the context of ITE. Here the tables are potentially turned, as I place myself into the picture, as part of the performative 'neoliberal juggernaut' (Doherty 2015). Discussing the Teacher Standards applicable to her QTS award (DfE 2012), Sarah did not feel that the standards, or her need to meet them in order to gain QTS, had constrained her creativity. Her reasoning was, that although the standards demand teachers, for example, to plan and teach well-structured lesson and ensure pupils make good progress (standards 4 and 2 respectively) they did not specify *how* this was to be done. Sarah felt that the standards left her freedom to make those choices, albeit within the constraints that individual schools may impose as discussed earlier. Referring to Teacher Standard (TS) 2, Sarah said:

Obviously, you've got to show progress of all of your pupils, but again it's not with the standards it's not saying that they have to get to a certain stage, so you can still be creative in how you do teach.  
(Transcript section 29)

Referring to TS 4, Sarah reflected:

It doesn't tell you how to teach that and it doesn't limit your creativity, it doesn't say you have to teach a lesson this way, it's just saying that you need to have the planning there, so I don't think the standards really inhibit your creativity. (Transcript section 29)

Sarah was asked further about our ITE performative agenda, specifically to increase the number of students graded as outstanding on their placements (transcript section 30). Again, Sarah did not feel this had inhibited her teaching approaches. We (ITE leaders) had placed an explicit focus on TS2, 5 and 6 for Sarah's cohort because our student attainment data suggested these were the weakest standards. Sarah reflected (transcript section 33) that, whilst this had raised her awareness of accountability in school as a teacher, again this focus had not inhibited her creative teaching. At first sight this may seem unusual, when she had articulated the restrictions that she felt as a result of the school's expectations. On her previous two placements, Sarah had been graded as outstanding working at Key Stage 2 (English schools years 3-6; pupils ages 7-11). On her final placement she was in Key Stage 1 for the first time and had been clear that this was not her age group of choice. I knew from pre-placement meetings that Sarah was very driven to be graded as outstanding on her final placement (transcript section 34). Ultimately, she was graded as 'good' on SE3. This is an example of the applicability of Lacan's ideas to ITE as discussed in chapter 2, section 2.3.3. The notion of the 'Thing', for example, may be, as here, the unattainable concept for Sarah student teacher, namely "*I want to be an outstanding teacher*". This can be seen as unattainable, as, even if given such a grading, as Sarah had been on SE2, it is a fleeting judgement in a particular time and place. Her grading as 'good' on SE3 did not make her a lesser teacher. It was however, seen as more applicable in that Key Stage 1 context.

Sarah clearly identified what she referred to as her self-drive (to be graded as outstanding) as an important factor in her teaching choices:

Because I have that self-drive, I think that's why I am naturally more creative and try and engage the children in different ways ...I try and encompass what they enjoy... I think that personal drive makes me more creative in my approaches. (Transcript section 35)

Here, Sarah's creative agency was in tension with the school's performative agenda and through that, the performative agenda of ITE. My argument here, is not whether the grading of 'good' was right or wrong. However, in that setting, there was a tension between Sarah's wish to teach creatively and promote a love of learning and the combined performative requirements of the SE3 school and the ITE course (my course) on which Sarah was studying. The particular combination of the three was not entirely compatible in this case. As will be seen in chapter 5, other students (e.g. Evelyn) also reflected on the somewhat random chances of 'success' in ITE, depending as they do, on the degree of synergy between students and the ethos and leadership of school placements. Simon, earlier in this chapter, reflected starkly on the same issue with respect to employment as a teacher; but at least there, individuals have a greater degree of choice of setting than for a QTS course placement, which is largely imposed.

In the ITE context, Sarah reflected very specifically on the use of ITE documentation as the basis for making judgement on the quality of teaching and learning of ITE students. It is interesting to see her view, that whilst the big picture of teacher standards and ITE targets had not inhibited her creative practice, the minutiae of lesson appraisal proformas, imposed by ITE leaders (again, myself included) had done just that. Her view was, that the level of detail about desirable features to show good or outstanding practice, led her (with an example on the use of information technology) to seek opportunities for her mentor to 'tick off that box in the appraisal

grid' (transcript section 86). There is a salutary lesson here, that in trying to pursue a performative agenda and targets to raise the numbers of students graded as good or outstanding, we (ITE) had used a surveillance and monitoring approach that was potentially mechanistic and reductive (Clarke 2013b), imposing not just standards but forms of teaching. It is worth noting that, from September 2018, we have implemented a much less detailed proforma, explicitly to avoid such dictation of approach (YSJ 2018).

As a final thought about ITE, Sarah reflected on the wider struggles between creativity and performativity and whether she thought teachers are able to bring their own creative approaches to meet that performative agenda. She had an interesting perspective, bearing in mind her earlier 'tearing my hair out' reflection on her creativity module

It depends...I think that's all about teacher education, so if all institutes had a creativity module or taught, like trainee teachers how to teach creatively or you know, just broaden their understanding of what creativity is then yes, but unless that is a national kind of sweeping agenda I don't think [so]. (Transcript section 92)

This comment gives food for thought. There is an irony here, that the focus module for this research is an elective. Whilst all of the participants have taken it, not all of my Primary Education students have. The irony lies in that I am potentially giving the message, that creativity for my QTS students lies only in this one elective module, so is not for everyone. That is certainly not the intention. Chapter 7 will engage with the issue of ITE's role, proposing a reimagined approach to promoting creative agency for QTS students.

Whilst Sarah reflected on the tensions between creativity and performativity and the impact on her placement grading, she was asked more generally about those tensions in the wider area of primary education. Sarah, she felt that the testing

regime especially at Year 2 and Year 6 of primary schools meant that government policy and focus was on ensuring pupils got to a specific, measured standard. She said (transcript section 82),

they don't want to see...well it's not that they don't want to see it, but they don't promote creativity and engagement, they just want to ensure that children have got to a particular standard so you can see that through the phonics screening tests, you can see that in the year 2 SATS, the year 6 SATS, and then further past that with GCSE's and A-levels.

I asked Sarah if this struggle between creativity and performativity was worth fighting. She said:

Yes, because I am a believer that if children are engaged, they're going to make more progress.... working that back to when I was a child, a lot of what I remember from school is just drilling into us how to multiply, do long division and all that sort of thing, I don't ever remember anything being creative as such, it was always about the right or wrong answer, and I didn't really engage as much as I could have really, so I think if you promote that love of learning then children are going to make more progression. (transcript section 88)

There is a suggestion here that, like Simon, Sarah still had a belief in creative approaches to teaching even when she could see the tensions with performatively driven expectations. She felt the "struggle" was worth the fight, I asked if she felt it could be won. She had a clear response:

No... because of the society we live in; we are accountable, we are teachers, so we have to obviously ensure that children are working to their best ability, I don't think it has to be done through SATS ... I don't think creativity will ever outshine assessment; I think assessment is always going to be the main focus. (Transcript section 90)

This reflection on the overriding importance of assessment and data, leads into the final theme, creative agency.

#### 4.2.1.3 Theme 3: creative agency

In discussing creative agency explicitly with Sarah, the concept was defined by me as:

the freedom that [teachers] feel to approach teaching and learning in a creative way ... the sense of empowerment and freedom to approach teaching and learning in your own creative way.  
(Transcript section 53)

Sarah's frustrations with the theoretical analysis of creativity in her university module has been discussed in section 4.2.1.1. Shortly after that module, she started her SE3 placement. Despite some of the constraints that she felt, discussed in the previous section, compared to earlier placements she had more freedom by virtue of being a final placement student and felt more confident in her creative approaches. Sarah felt that once in school, her academic study of creativity began to make more sense, as it was placed into the school teaching context. For SE3 :

I think because with the [creativity module] assignment I had taken everything out of context, and because of all these definitions that were going round, and it just seemed to contradict everything. But then when I put it into the context of school, that teaching side of it made more sense. (Transcript section 62)

Sarah related this to the greater freedom she felt on SE3, compared to earlier placements.

I think because I had more freedom I felt more confident in my creative approaches... because I had more freedom with how I could teach certain curricular areas I felt that my confidence grew a little bit more, because I had that wider understanding of creativity through the assignment as well. (Transcript section 59)

Putting together the discussion of performativity, creativity and agency, Sarah reflected further on the constraints she had experienced, despite feeling confident and agentic during SE3. I asked her if she could see herself working happily in that school as an NQT. Sarah was clear:

No. Because I wouldn't be able to teach how I wanted to teach, I would be expected to follow the schemes, basically to the letter. Whilst I was allowed to obviously do my own thing because I am still a student teacher ... I know that if I was to work there the expectation would be for me to make sure that the children were making progress, and that would be my main focus rather than promoting a love of learning which is one of my values. (Transcript section 43)

Whilst she felt some freedoms as a student teacher on placement, she did not see the same agency being afforded to her as an NQT. As Sarah had a job interview the morning after the research interview, we had been reviewing her plans for teaching as part of that selection process. It was commented on, that the planned teaching looked different to what she had described as the required approaches to teaching on SE3. Two things became clear (transcript sections 71-74). Firstly, Sarah was intending to work in a fashion that had more freedom and less 'showing them a method and then getting them to do ten questions in their book' (transcript section 72) as had been more the expectation on SE3. Secondly, in doing so, she was trying to project herself authentically. She was trying to exercise her creative agency in the context of a formal job interview. Sarah had been clear that she could not see herself working happily in her SE3 school. In transcript section 78 said she would not apply if a job came up there and had been looking for jobs where a clearer focus on children's learning was apparent. There is evidence here to suggest that Sarah was bringing that sense of creative agency very firmly into her career plans. She had experienced a degree of constraint on her practice in SE3, due to performative pressures and perceived that this would be higher as an NQT. Therefore, she was seeking work in an environment where these pressures would be less directing of her teaching approaches, allowing her to practice in a more creative, agentic fashion. She had felt the frustration of constraint on SE3 and was looking forwards in her career, seeking an opportunity to teach in a way more akin to the 'art of living' (Ruti 2009; 2012); not transcending the performative pressures of modern schooling in the



UK, but able to work within them, in a way that made more sense to her. Ruti argues that our agency is formed in social contexts; she sees as neither entirely without agency nor entirely free and agentic. Sarah had experienced different levels of freedom and agency on her placements and wanted a job where she could see a greater, rather than lesser freedom as a teacher. She was actively looking for a job that she saw as allowing her 'teacher's soul' to flourish rather than succumb to 'terrors of performativity' (Ball 2003).

Sarah, however, finished the interview on a less positive note, suggesting that at the end of her QTS course, whilst she felt confident in herself and her creative teaching, she did not feel positive about the UK school environment. She was asked if she felt optimistic or pessimistic for the future. Her simple answer was 'pessimistic which is why I want to move to Australia [to teach] (transcript section 94). Explaining this she said

I think their approach to teaching doesn't have this drive on assessment and accountability as much as here in the UK, at the moment it just seems like we're not trusted to do our job correctly, ... there doesn't seem to be any trust between... the government really, because...well that's it, they don't trust us. (Transcript section 96)

It is perhaps this final comment that suggests, most tellingly, the reality in this case of the negative impacts of marketisation and performative foci, on the very soul of emerging young professionals; and this from a student, who, like Simon, finished her course very well and confidently as a new teacher.

Attention now turns to Sarah's short email interview, completed by all participants in May 2018, by which time she had been teaching for almost one year as a qualified teacher.

#### **4.2.2 Findings from Sarah's email interview**

In this section, evidence from Sarah's individual email interview responses will be presented. Parallels will be drawn to the more detailed interview evidence, already presented, from her time as final year student. This will provide evidence as to extent to which her views, practices, and sense of creative agency have endured, strengthened or diminished during her first year as a qualified class teacher.

Sarah was asked what helped her to approach teaching and learning in her own creative way. She identified her own developing views on creativity, the ethos of the school and the needs of the children as key factors. Sarah's comments elaborate on these choices:

My own ideas about creativity are the biggest influencer as I am relatively free to plan my own lessons day to day. The ethos of the school also promotes creativity and the child being the centre of the curriculum (although this does not always happen with current pressure on performing well in maths, SPaG [spelling, punctuation and grammar] and writing).

Two key things are suggested here. Firstly, that Sarah's continued 'active definition' of creativity is being very influential; she is experiencing an appreciable level of creative agency. It is worth reflecting back to section 4.2.1.3, where Sarah articulates her desire to base NQT employment decisions, at least to some extent, on her perceived level of creative freedom in a potential school. It would appear, that towards the end of her NQT year, she is experiencing that. The second feature is that the school ethos is influential; positively in promoting her creative agency but also with a clear, lesser degree of freedom in the standards data driven subject of English and mathematics.

Conversely, reflecting on factors that hinder such approaches she highlighted assessment pressures, lesson appraisals and Ofsted as important, 'She elaborated

using a brief example from the content of the National Curriculum for English (DfE 2013):

SATs and government pressure! I am only in Year 4 and yet the SLT [senior leadership team] are prepping us for getting the children Year 6 ready! Lessons are now about 'What is and have you included a fronted adverbial in your writing?' rather than promoting a love of learning and allowing children to experiment with their learning objectives.

So, there appears to be distinctions here between areas in which Sarah as an NQT is feeling significant levels of creative freedom and areas in which the school leadership are being more prescriptive in learning foci. That focus would appear to be driven, ultimately, by the performative indicators of Year 6 statutory assessments and government targets (currently floor standards around pupil attainment and progress: DfE 2018).

Asked to exemplify her broad approaches to creative teaching and learning, Sarah said:

I have a parallel class in which we plan together. We teach in topics and try to keep these as exciting as possible. For example, our current topic is Vikings, so we try to use as many hooks as possible- finding a Viking coin purse, travelling back in time to the Vikings, visiting the Jorvik centre. This allows us to motivate the children and keep them interested and enthusiastic about learning.

So, Sarah was clear about her views on what may be deemed as creative teaching and learning. However, asked specifically to define creativity in her own way now (her 'active definition' of creativity) some of her frustrations at theoretical perspectives were again clear:

I still believe that creativity is subjective and therefore cannot be valued if it cannot be defined. Within education, 'little c' creativity can be accomplished through planning exciting lessons which motivate the children in their learning ... I still believe 'little c' creativity to be another term used by educators to describe effective and

outstanding pedagogy whilst placing children's love of learning at the centre of this.

This suggests, that Sarah's view of creativity, is that it is a tricky concept to define.

There is resonance here with Scoffham, (2017) who, like Sarah, argues that creativity is both difficult to define and widely seen as a key element of effective teaching.

However, Sarah she is clear about how she sees it in teaching and learning terms. It is teaching that engages and motivates pupils through exciting approaches. What she struggles with, is a clear definition. This leads on to a related point, picking up on her reflection (above) that creativity 'cannot be valued if it cannot be defined'. Having talked (above) about 'placing children's love of learning at the centre' of creative teaching, she went further about her current realities:

Unfortunately, with government pressure on attainment, I feel that creativity is almost diminished within our profession. We no longer have the time nor flexibility to allow children to explore their own learning. We have learning objectives to teach from the national curriculum and must place children within a table to state whether they are at the expected standard. Teaching is almost becoming a tick box exercise, labelling children with their academic achievements against these standards rather than their individuality.

In this rather bleak reflection, two things are suggested. Firstly, that she sees creativity not being valued, because it cannot be tangibly defined in the same way as performance data. Secondly, there appears to be reflected here, the dominance of data driven subjects in the overall picture of freedoms afforded to Sarah; it is these subjects on which the DfE accountabilities highlighted above are based. As stated earlier, it is in these subjects that Sarah was experiencing much less freedom and the constraining influences of data and targets would seem to be becoming dominant. This was having a negative impact on her freedom to approach teaching in her own way. The kinds of things that Sarah talks about are by no means

uncommon, if my experiences of visiting many schools and talking to many student teachers are any indication. What we see here is some of the reality of the logic of performativity (Foucault 1994; 2002; Flint and Peim 2012;); the performative drive becomes so accepted in ideology and practice, that to *not* work in this way, can seem unthinkable or illogical; performatively driven practice becomes the habitus (Bourdieu 1984; 1991).

So, Sarah is simultaneously clear about the kind of creative teacher she wants to be, and clear that she does not always feel free to be that teacher.

If one teaches in a 'creative' way, I feel that both children and teacher benefit. I joined the teaching profession to instil a love of learning within the children. If I teach in a creative way, I am happier and feel like I am achieving my goal. Of course, the children in my class will then benefit from this! If I could then promote creative learning, I know that the children would benefit from this too. They may not fully understand all of the SPaG terms etc., but they would be much more educated and knowledgeable in the wider world and within themselves.

There is a sense here of a desire for an agentic self-formation as a teacher, especially in the phrase 'If I teach in a creative way, I am happier and feel like I am achieving my goal'. But in the context of her other comments, it is an agency that she is not experiencing fully. Sarah's goals are not selfish. They are to help children learn in a way that makes sense for her and not simply to achieve imposed quantitative targets of attainment and progress. This is, of course, in tension with her characterisation of her current setting as one in which creativity and performativity are in direct conflict. Sarah appears clear about how she wants to teach, but also clear that this is not part of her current reality.

Sarah was asked how her sense of creative agency (I used that phrase) had changed over time. She commented on some of the constraints she had experienced since starting her teaching career:

Whilst studying the APF [creativity module] I found ideas and definitions of creativity which made me think and wonder about myself as a teacher. My mindset about who I wanted to be as a teacher and the style I wanted to teach in became stronger. However, SE3 and teaching my own class are completely different as I have to ensure these children perform... Whilst I can still teach in a 'creative way' this is still hindered with ensuring the majority (if not all) of the class have secured that learning objective.

There are three significant elements here. First, the strong, clear sense of agency and optimism that Sarah felt as she embarked on her career. Second, is the impact of having to show children's learning in a specific fashion, which she sees clearly as a hindrance to her creativity as a teacher. Third, is the juxtaposition of these two elements. Sarah still seems to feel an appreciable degree of agency, in her strong convictions about the creative teacher that she wants to be. However, in reality, she faces constraints. The impact appears to be more on the working out of her agency in practice, rather than on her internal sense of agency, which is arguably stronger than may be expected, given the realities that she describes. This appears to be in contrast to Simon, whose realities virtually stripped away his very sense of creative agency. Sarah was clear about the impact of having a clear sense of agency:

Creative agency would give the power back to teachers. If the government trusted QUALIFIED [Sarah's emphasis] teachers to do the job they are QUALIFIED to do, then children would not become a test score. Whilst I understand I must ensure that children reach their full potential and have acquired skills necessary to life, I feel it is much more than knowing how to put angles in the correct order of size.

There is a sense of a 'crying out' here'; an impassioned plea. Sarah has that sense of agency; she believes it to be crucial, but her experience appears to be, that the practical living of the agency is difficult in the current climate represented (by no means uniquely) in her current setting. What seems clear again, is the pivotal role of the performative agenda. Although Sarah articulates this at government level, for the class teacher, this only impacts when filtered through a school's leadership;

government targets and expectations become (or do not become) those of the school leader. Whilst Sarah's experiences, at the point of her email interview, were nowhere near as negative as Simon's, that tension between being the teacher that she wants to be and the teacher that she feels she can be, is tangible.

#### **4.2.3 Summary of findings: Sarah**

Combining the analysis of the data from Sarah's interviews, there is evidence to suggest that Sarah has shown a passion for creative approaches to learning and teaching but a diminishing sense of creative agency as her teaching journey has progressed. In a similar, if less extreme fashion than in Simon's case, her passion and desire to see creative practice flourish has been in tension with and met challenge from performative school climates. She has been prepared to work in ways that challenge established norms in developing his creative practice but has felt less able to do that as her career has developed. As time has gone on, the pressures of a performative climate have had negative impacts on her sense of creative agency and her freedom to practice.

The evidence suggests, that Sarah's sense of agency has declined a little over time. However, she has maintained a clear picture of the creative teacher that she wants to be. There has been a greater decline of her sense of creative agency *in practice*. Despite her sense of agency, Sarah has found the practical application, the living out, of that agency to be challenging in the current performative climate of primary education and specifically her NQT school. An ongoing focus on targets for pupil attainment and progress (at national and school levels) are impacting on her forms of teaching, especially in English and mathematics. Her freedoms to practice in the creative fashion that she wants to are being significantly constrained.

Despite this, she maintains her desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate. Sarah remains clear and passionate about the importance of creativity in teaching and learning. Ultimately it is that passion that has created the tensions between what she desires and what she has experienced. She was at the point, when she completed her email interview, that suggested she was beginning to see creativity or performativity as something of a choice. Her talk of wanting to teach in Australia was directly related to these tensions. There is evidence to suggest that the Sarah has not felt free as a teacher, to work in a way that makes sense for her.

Sarah's sense of creative agency has been closely tied to the expectations of senior school leaders. Whilst, as will be seen, this also true of some of the participants in chapter 5, but in a positive context, for Sarah the weight of expectation, control and prescription had ultimately been significant and in a negative sense. Whilst this was not to the devastating extent as for Simon, I would argue that Sarah's experience typifies the struggle between the terrors of performativity and the teacher's soul, discussed by Ball (2003). As with Simon, the question remains as to whether this is more a matter of power being exercised agentially by leaders who believe they are acting in the right way, or more a matter of 'terror and soul' struggles being passed down to class teacher by school leaders who themselves feel a lack of agency. This will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter 7.

We now move to chapter 5. This has a second set of participants, this time of three student teachers. The difference here, is the evidence to suggest a much more agentic experience of creative teaching and learning, but still set within the same overall performative climate of contemporary primary education.



## Chapter 5: The struggle for creativity: productive tension

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### Introduction

The theme of this second set of participants within my case study, is “the struggle for creativity” but with a focus on situations of productive tension between creativity and performativity. It focusses, as did chapter 4, on a set of participant student teachers from my own Primary Education programme. Interview data was collected near the end of their course as trainee teachers and at later stages in their careers as qualified teachers. My purpose is to provide evidence that suggests that when students and qualified teachers develop a strong sense of creative identity and agency, their teaching and pupils’ learning can flourish within a performative climate. The findings will also provide evidence to suggest how the participants’ perceptions of creativity affect their agency and their practice. Thus, the chapter will build upon the theoretical discussions of chapter 2, developing these in practice. In this chapter, in contrast to chapter 4, the focus will be more on the potential of a strong sense of self-formation and agency in promoting creative teaching and learning. For each participant, key findings from interviews will be highlighted and discussed.

As explained in chapter 3, for each of the participants (Mike, Sonia and Evelyn) data is drawn from two sources. Firstly, for each, separately, an interview was conducted during or shortly after their final course school placement. Secondly, a follow-up email interview was completed in May 2018, almost six years into their careers in the cases of Mike and Sonia and one year for Evelyn. Where the interviews took place in during final placements (Mike and Sonia), they were immediately after a one-hour lesson observation. Evelyn’s interview was conducted shortly after the school placement finished. In each case, the interviews sought to focus on how each participant worked out, in their professional practice, their ideas of creativity,

explored in the course module *Creativity in Primary Education* and how they perceived and addressed any tensions between creativity and performativity.

The first participant in this chapter is Mike.

## **5.1 Mike**

Mike studied Primary Education between September 2009 and June 2012. He took up his first primary school teaching post in September 2012. His interview was conducted during his final placement in March 2012. His email interview was completed in May 2018 by which time he had been teaching full time for almost 6 years.

### **5.1.1 Individual interview findings**

As discussed in chapter 3, individual interviews were analysed thematically by processes of coding. The same process was followed, as explained for Simon in section 4.1.1. Analysis of Mike's interview suggested five significant themes. The first was what I have termed parallel and unexpected learning. The second is challenging established practice, especially within Mike's placement setting. The third is impact on learning. The fourth and fifth are Mike's reflections of creativity and ownership and agency; these have been conflated for discussion, as will be explained later.

Each theme will now be discussed.

#### **5.1.1.1 Theme 1: Parallel and unexpected learning outcomes**

The phrases parallel and unexpected learning have been used to mean two similar, but distinct things that Mike spoke about in his interview. Parallel learning refers to learning that Mike intended for the children but was not explicitly expressed to them.

Unexpected learning refers to learning that Mike identified but had not expected to occur in his lesson. The context of the lesson was that the children (Year 1, age 6) were making models of pirate ships. The lesson was planned as a literacy lesson. What became clear early in the interview, was that Mike, driven by identification of the needs of the class had planned parallel learning, where oracy development was needed as a precursor to developing the children's writing skills. Mike said (transcript section 6):

Because the children need, I feel these children particularly need to be enthused and engaged in what they are doing. And they need to develop the oracy skills before they can do any writing.

Further to this, he went on to say that he wanted to develop pupil collaboration to develop oral vocabulary to be used in writing.

I wanted to add a new dimension to it and its developing their team work and social skills and using each other to learn and think of new adjectives, to bounce off and it's their work, they're thinking about what they want their pirate ship to look like and not thinking about adjectives per se; they are thinking about what it looks like and the words they are using if that makes sense. (Transcript section 6)

As will be discussed more fully later, this was not the established practice in the class into which Mike had been placed. In transcript section 12, Mike described how he noticed the children were keen to discuss practical work far more than formal learning activities, so he decided to incorporate these into develop oracy as a route to developing written literacy skills. Mike's written plan for the lesson (expected practice for students on placement) included prompts to himself (and in turn for the children) "There is no right answer" and "Discussion is the key to extracting ideas".

Some children struggle and they may know what they want to say but they can't write it, so in discussion, if we feel – and I know the two Teaching Assistants [TAs] feel very strongly about it as well and we work as a team quite strongly to do that – is to discuss with the children because a lot of children can say things but can't write them... the more they talk about their ideas the more confident they

feel about expressing them and therefore more confident about writing them. (Transcript section 14)

So, Mike was teaching in a way that he saw as right, even though it was not the normal practice in that class. He was responding to the particular needs of his pupils. As Goepel, Childerhouse and Sharpe (2015) argue, creative and alternative approaches to the curriculum and assessment, promote the inclusion of children with a range of needs. Amongst the planned parallel learning, was also the unexpected learning. Mike planned to use junk modelling to develop oracy and writing learning objectives, specifically adjectives; a literacy lesson using Art and Technology. What he had not expected was the quality of the design work (in addition to the oracy/writing). As Mike said (transcript section 54),

I think it [the practical approach] enhanced the learning objective [oracy and writing] because in the discussion I had with the children they were able to use their adjectives without realising they were using them ... and their design skills were definitely developed. I wasn't expecting anything amazing [from the design as the focus LO was literacy based] but the treasure chests in particular with the message in a bottle, really blew me away. They were using their ideas to create something that I wasn't expecting. That took it on further and has given me more things to look at in a future lesson. They have taken me forward which I wouldn't have expected.

The perceived impact of the lesson will be discussed more fully later. Mike was asked how he may, on reflection on that lesson, approach a similar lesson differently. His key reflection was a desire to further enhance the parallel learning; 'I wouldn't have discussed the objectives at the beginning. I would have just set the task' (transcript section 58). Although writing in a higher education context, Erikson and Erikson (2018) express concerns about the use of explicit learning outcomes. In this context, the most pertinent problem they highlight, is that such outcomes can set a limit on the ambition and achievement of learners, if unexpected learning is ignored. Asked why he would not have discussed the learning outcomes, Mike

articulated a belief, that removing the teacher direction of learning outcomes (even parallel outcomes) would develop their oracy further and in turn their writing; a clear example of Erikson and Erikson's argument. Mike was clear in this view (transcript section 60);

... just set them off and get them discussing. When the children aren't aware of what they are learning you tend to get more honest, more frank in depth conversations. Not sharing that until the end would be a big thing.

These kinds of approaches were new to the class and Mike was not teaching in the same way as the established class teacher. So, there was a sense of challenge her to the established practices. So, I now turn to the second key theme from the interview.

#### **5.1.1.2 Theme 2: Challenging established practices**

In Mike's interview, it was very clear at a very early stage, that the kind of approaches that had been observed and later discussed, had not been the norm in the class in which he was placed.

PR: So is that kind of approach something that is well established before you came ...

Mike: No [interrupting – very definite]

PR: OK

Mike: No. Within the classroom that I am in at the moment, it was very much worksheets, fill in the gaps a lot of the time and children didn't seem to be engaged at all. So, I tried it, just in a one-off lesson, we created a Big Bad Wolf outside the classroom and they really responded to it well.

(Transcript sections 7-10)

This was the start of clear evidence that Mike had not simply followed the established practice of the class teacher. He saw things with which he was not

happy and had the confidence to try something else; the kinds of approaches described in the previous section. Mike was also clear about how his thinking and practice had moved on, from his second school experience (SE2) to this, his final school experience (SE3). To approach the same literacy objectives as the focus lesson, Mike described how on SE2, he would have used a much more teacher led approach e.g. templates for colouring, then adding adjectives. But he would not have used the practical design and making activity, to prompt oracy, nor focussed on oracy to develop writing. As Mike said (transcript section 27) 'The approach. The way I look at how children learn has completely changed. *Completely* changed.' He goes on to describe how he was moving away from pressures to record everything and to tap more into children's imaginations and discussions. SE3 was Mike's first time teaching year 1 children (aged 5-6) which was not a place of comfort; 'I was petrified about coming into year '1 (transcript section 53). Mike went on to describe how his fears were allayed by the children and how his practice developed, in terms of giving the pupils more freedom and responsibility:

I always thought to begin with that we were there to teach and the children were there to learn. But now I look at it as we teacher and learn and the children teach and learn because the children have taught me so much here. I was petrified about coming into year 1 and they have taught me that there are no worries about it and they can be just as good as year 6. And they have learned from me that their ideas can be just as important as my ideas. So, I think giving children responsibility for their learning to a certain extent and working alongside the teacher, although they don't realise it, is something I do a lot more of now, but would never have done before. (Transcript section 52)

During the interview, a strong sense was emerging of this breaking from the norms of that classroom, so Mike was asked directly (transcript section 32-39)

PR: Has there been times you have had to stick your neck out a bit and stand your ground.

Mike: Yes recently. Last week in discussion with my class teacher, I said about how I am quite drained from the process so far, from the first three weeks and she said

*“well you’ve got all these big ideas, maybe you just need to something more mundane, because the children are getting swept up and I don’t know if they are showing any progress.”*

So, in a way, to prove me right the next day, I did some writing with them and the progress was there - we got an older piece of writing against what they had written. To me it showed a lot of progress compared to when they were only writing a sentence and the fact that they were able to develop their writing like that. So, I did have to say that you know I believe that my teaching style has benefited these children.

Mike can be seen to be breaking from the norms of the SE3 classroom. He was developing practice that was different to his previous SE2 placement. What can be seen in this extract, though, is that the challenge to his more creative approaches was based upon a performative argument about pupil progress in their learning. Whilst Mike was challenging the norms of practice, he was starting to justify his approaches, based on the well-established measures of pupil progress. There is the first indication of what I have framed in the chapter title as ‘productive tension between creativity and performativity. Mike was keen to exercise creative freedoms in his teaching. He justified this in the established performative terms of the class teacher. He wanted to show how his approaches could deliver the end results that she wanted.

It is to the perceived impact of his creative approaches to which I now turn.

### **5.1.1.3 Theme 3: Impact on learning**

Throughout the interview, Mike was clear that his creative approaches to the curriculum were promoting good pupil progress. Describing his combination of practical and practical work leading on to writing, he said;

'we do writing, taking everything we have done, everything we learned and there is huge progress in the kids – huge progress' (transcript section 12).

Later he went to say:

I didn't appreciate how fully it would develop the children. I didn't think that focussing on speaking and listening to enhance writing, I didn't think it would develop the children half as much as it has. (Transcript section 68)

This view was supported by the Teaching Assistant (TA) who was working with the class during the lesson observation. The TA was not approached for any data collection, but spontaneously came to me and offered her views. I raised this as part of the interview (transcript section 17; PR = me speaking)

PR: [The TA] came over to me and said "I can't believe it ...it's like invasion of the body snatchers but in a good way" and she was talking about initially [when Mike started placement] that the children were quieter, but she went on to say, they are more engaged than normal... that wouldn't have happened. And we were talking about how that focus on speaking and listening was better ... she seemed to be saying, "This works better than what they are used to".

The TAs were clearly not only working under his direction but had been influenced in their own thinking and practice by his different, creative approaches; they had seen and verified the positive impacts on the pupils. As Mike said (transcript section 69)

They [TAs] were very much supportive of trying different activities but I don't think they appreciated how fully it would develop the children. I didn't appreciate how fully it would develop the children. I didn't think that focussing on speaking and listening to enhance writing particularly in literacy, or going outside in Maths to make a giant clock and the children being the hour hand and the minute hand – I didn't think it would develop the children half as much as it has. To have children talk – like the child who would not initiate a conversation [when he started SE3] to have her now come up and start chatting away to you about anything is a really nice feeling and to know you have influenced those children and to have parents come in and say you have been spoken about at home – it's nice to know you are making a difference.



Whilst we can see Mike's earlier justification of his approaches in terms of measurable pupil attainment, we can see here, the value he attributes to other positive, but unquantifiable pupil outcomes as well.

As seen in the previous section, the challenge to Mike's practice came from the class teacher, based on pupil progress; an undoubted priority in the contemporary classroom. The class teacher remains responsible for pupil progress during a student's placement, so making the challenge was well within her rights and responsibilities. Mike did find this challenge upsetting and caused him to doubt his approaches (transcript section 79 below). Typically, during a formal school placement, the class teacher will be with the student on a day to day basis, providing ongoing informal feedback. The mentor is responsible for formal appraisals, target setting, judgements and final grading of the student teacher. I took this up, exploring how his placement mentor (the Headteacher in this case) viewed his approaches and the differences from the established approaches in that class. Mike's response shows her very different viewpoint to the class teacher:

She [headteacher/mentor] was very supportive from day one. Especially after the professional discussion I had with the class teacher, I spoke to the mentor because it did upset me in a way as I thought "am I wrong in doing so?" [trying new approaches]. But my mentor said, "at the end of the day you're the teacher and you must do what's best for the kids." (Transcript section 79)

This support also extended to formal appraisals where the mentor judged the effectiveness of the approaches that Mike chose rather than imposing any preferred style of teaching). I asked Mike, if his desire to try new things created any tension for formal appraisals. He said:

No. She [the mentor, as opposed to the class teacher] notices when I try different things and she likes to see me taking a risk. She likes to see me making it practical. She is very supportive. She lets me do what I want to do. (Transcript section 81)

So, the class teacher challenged Mike's approaches on the basis of pupil progress, and this created a tension. The headteacher/mentor did not challenge Mike purely on the basis of his approaches. This helped the tension to be more productive. In chapter 2 (2.3.3.1) the concept of 'lack' was discussed in the context of Lacan's theory of psychological development. Ruti (2006; 2012) argues that this 'lack' prompts us to create to fill our lack and through our creative endeavours we find ways to compensate for our lack. Mike's class teacher's criticisms caused him upset, as they were about his own choice of approaches. He addressed this, not by conforming to her ways of thinking and teaching, but by further developing his own approaches and showing the results in terms of the children's learning. The action we take to fill the void, or lack, helps us to attain creative agency as we engage in 'the continuous process of being human' (Ruti, 2009, p.96). This can be seen in Mike's experiences. It does not mean that the headteacher had no focus on pupil progress. The headteacher still expected to see pupil progress outcomes but was prepared to value different routes to the same end. It should, however, be acknowledged, that the headteacher played a significant role in allowing Mike's sense of agency to develop. This will be explored further in the next section.

There is evidence to suggest, that Mike's desire to try new approaches, was rooted in his developing views on creativity and an emerging sense of identity and agency - the remaining two themes from the interview. These will be addressed together as they interrelate so strongly and influence each other.

#### **5.1.1.4 Themes 4 and 5. Mike's reflections on creativity: Ownership and agency**

This section will present the findings for Mike's interview about how he perceived creativity and creative practice as a teacher. It will also present findings about his sense of ownership of his teaching and how his sense of creative agency was

emerging through, and influencing, his practice. What will emerge however, is a strong thread that Mike was teaching in a way that was not the norm for the class. It was something that he saw as more creative, that showed his growing confidence and sense of agency but, a way of teaching that also operated within his inescapable performative climate.

The lesson that formed the basis of the interview was centred around literacy learning outcomes about oracy and developing descriptive language. However, the lesson was planned around collaborate junk modelling (transcript sections 3-5). Section 5.1.1.1 and 5.1.1.2 provide evidence to suggest that Mike was breaking from the established approaches of his placement class, developing learning in parallel and even unexpected ways. What also emerges is Mike's growing confidence and sense of creative agency, to try new approaches. In transcript section 10 he says

Within the classroom that I am in at the moment, it was very much worksheets, fill in the gaps a lot of the time and children didn't seem to be engaged at all. So, I tried it, just in a one-off lesson, we created a Big Bad Wolf outside the classroom and they really responded to it well.

In the high stakes (for Mike) context of a final assessed school placement, he was developing the confidence, sense of ownership of his teaching and the creative agency to make bold choices. It is worth noting, that he extends this sense of ownership and freedom to the pupils:

So, we have been really looking at developing their imaginations, developing their own thought processes, making them into individuals and then realising that there doesn't always have to be right answer – what they think is right, can be right. It is the ownership of their own work. (Transcript section 14)

There is evidence here, of how Mike's ideas about creativity were not only emerging, but were also influencing his practice. When asked how that lesson reflected him as a creative practitioner, at that point in time, he articulated some clear features of how

he saw creativity: giving children freedom and responsibility in their learning, elements of role reversal (teacher can learn in from the pupils) and an explicit valuing of children's ideas. For example, in transcript section 53 he says:

Children's ideas are just as important as teachers' ideas. I always thought to begin with that we were there to teach and the children were there to learn. But now I look at it as we teach and learn, and the children teach and learn because the children have taught me so much here. ... they have learned from me that their ideas can be just as important as my ideas. So, I think giving children responsibility for their learning to a certain extent and working alongside the teacher, although they don't realise it, is something I do a lot more of now, but would never have done before

These features were clearly tied into his growing sense of agency, because they all involved him departing, to greater or lesser extent, from the established approaches of that classroom. In other sections of the interview, other key features of creativity were clear to see: imagination, individuality and pupils' own thought process (transcript section 14); imagination (transcript section 27); exploratory learning and an excitement in learning (transcript section 16). There is resonance here with the NACCCE (1999) definition of creativity: 'Imaginative activity, fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value' (p.29). Mike had a clear focus on imaginative activity, he encouraged pupil originality and was himself using approaches that were to an extent original within that context. This was directed towards outcomes of 'value' – developing oracy to develop descriptive writing.

There is also clear evidence of Mike's growing sense of agency and confidence as a student teacher in the final stages of his primary education/QTS course. Transcript section 39 (referred to in 5.1.1.2) tells of a key moment when, challenged by his class teacher about his new approaches, he stuck to his principles but also sought to demonstrate how his approaches were effective. He talked about how draining the new approaches were, especially in a Key Stage 1 context for the first time in his

course, but how he persisted, despite the opposition. Through transcript sections 39 – 49 (below), that key dialogue with the class teacher, something of a critical or significant incident for Mike, is discussed. What emerges, is Mike's stronger sense of agency in that context, than on previous placements.

PR: So, to have that professional dialogue, hopefully in a professional way ...

Mike: Yes

PR ... not in an antagonist battle ...

Mike: No

PR ... takes a degree of professional confidence

Mike: Mmm

PR: Would you have that same dialogue in SE2

Mike: I would have taken it [the suggestion from the teacher] and done it basically.

PR: Is that because of the context you were in or where you were as a teacher?

Mike: Where I was as a teacher slightly. I took the teacher's advice because I thought she knew what was best for the children at that time. But as I have developed and grown as a teacher, grown in stature and got to know these children, and become more confident ... it was professional and I know that my class teacher doesn't wholly agree on how I am teaching but it is making the progress and I would rather do that and make six weeks of progress than revert back and make three weeks of stunted progress.

In articulating his developing views on creativity and his developing confidence and agency, there is evidence of how his views had been influenced; what had helped him on the journey to becoming a more confident, agentic, creative practitioner?

Mike clearly points to several influences. There is the expected development of experience as he progresses through the course and three formal placements.

However, he also points to more specific influences. In transcript sections 28 and 29 Mike refers to the influence of the "APF". He is referring to the module *Creativity in Primary Education*, on the Primary Education degree course that I lead and from which all the case study participants have been drawn.

PR: So, what is that journey of change for you? What has led to that change from SE2 to SE3?

Mike: The APF has been a big part of it and my research into creativity and seeing different teaching styles and how they affect the children

Mike goes on (transcript section 31) to describe a number of ways in which that module has influenced his teaching; how creativity can be stifled if not enough is done to embrace it; how creativity can operate within structure; how it is not all about giving children complete freedom; about the importance of using creative teaching approaches and allowing pupils to learn in creative ways. Transcript section 49 shows clearly how his engagement with the *Creativity in Primary Education* module has influenced his confidence and sense of creative agency.

The APF – I thought I was a fairly confident individual beforehand in myself, but I am lot more confident now through things we have learned on the APF, things I have researched. They have developed my opinions on teaching and my strength and belief that you need those things.

Another influence on his growing agency, as a counterpoint to the “struggle” that he had with his class teacher, was the very different relationship that he had with his formal placement mentor, also the acting Headteacher. The support from the mentor, especially in the face of the critical discussion with the class teacher, referred to earlier, was clearly important. Section 5.1.1.3 quoted Mike:

But my mentor said, “at the end of the day you’re the teacher and you must do what’s best for the kids.” (Transcript section 79)

This was not to suggest an environment of “anything goes”. It was a case, however, of a mentor that was encouraging different approaches, as long as they delivered the pupil learning that was expected. It seems clear, when Mike talks about the ‘draining’ feeling of developing new approaches, that the support of the mentor for those approaches was very beneficial and helped develop his agency within that

placement. When asked the 'unanswerable question' (transcript section 82) about the tensions, had the class teacher been the mentor, Mike provides a confident, almost dogmatic final response (transcript section 83):

It could be different but at the end of the day I have always said I am not going to change how I teach for anybody. If I feel like I am making a difference to the children and I have got evidence of it that's more important than a piece of paper to say I am doing it in a lesson [an appraisal report]. So, the bigger picture is more important than the little picture.

This section ends on a possibly ironic point. There is evidence here of a clear sense of growing confidence and agency, reflected in the emerging and developing ideas and practices of creativity, often in the face of some opposition. However, what also emerges, is that these agentic practices, on several occasions, are justified by reference to a more performative agenda. Throughout, Mike refers to the impact of his approaches on pupil progress. In the critical discussion with his class teacher (transcript section 39), Mike says

So, in a way, to prove me right the next day, I did some writing with them and the progress was there - we got an older piece of writing against what they had written. To me it showed a lot of progress.

In transcript section 83, quoted above ('If ... I am making a difference to the children and I have got evidence of it ...') Mike again, clearly frames his sense of agency within a performative justification. Does this suggest a lack of authentic agency? This will be picked up more fully later in this chapter, but I would argue that it more reflects a pragmatic sense of agency that recognises the performative context; it suggests that Mike is making sense of performativity in a way that fits his beliefs as a creative practitioner. He is finding a 'productive tension' between creativity and performativity, but one that is encouraged by senior leaders in his school. It can be argued that this 'proving' of the worth of his approaches, is actually contributing to the development of his agency, rather than diminishing it.

Attention now turns to Mike's response to the email interview completed by all participants in May 2018, by which time Mike had been teaching for almost six years as a qualified teacher.

### **5.1.2 Findings from Mike's email interview**

In this section, evidence from Mike's email interview responses will be presented. Parallels will be drawn to the more detailed interview evidence, already presented, from his time as final year student. This will provide evidence as to extent to which his views, practices, and sense of creative agency have endured, strengthened or diminished during six years as a qualified class teacher.

Reflecting on his current school, six years on, Mike identified his own developing views on creativity, the general ethos of the school and the needs of the children as important factors that help him to now approach teaching and learning in his own creative way. That resonates very clearly with his views as a final placement student teacher six years previously. Commenting on these factors he said:

I firmly believe that with my class' need alongside my continued engagement with creative approaches to enhance oracy and experience, means that I have to approach sessions creatively to keep them engaged. My work on MoE <sup>1</sup> is playing a large role in this as our school wants to move forwards with a creative, 'play and inquiry' based curriculum.

Conversely, reflecting on factors that hinder such approaches, he highlighted pupil progress targets and professional development opportunities as important, commenting that:

Time plays a big part in this - there is a lot to cover in the curriculum and making sure that I meet targets can sometimes limit the time I

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<sup>1</sup> MoE: Mantle of the Expert, an immersive drama-based approach to teaching and learning, developed by Dorothy Heathcote and which Mike experienced as part of the Creativity in Primary Education module. See <https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/>



would like to spend using different approaches. CPD on different approaches does not feel readily available in my county.

The performatively driven accountability agenda of pupil targets is evident. The previous comment, however, suggests that the school environment is one that still values creative approaches. Asked to define creativity in his own way now (his 'active definition' of creativity) Mike highlights choice for teachers (to approach teaching their way) and pupils (to respond in their way). He also highlights imagination. He concludes

I firmly believe that creativity involves imagination and is about choosing a way to represent thinking or to share knowledge that is unique to an individual or group.

Again, all these responses show a clear correlation to his ideas at university and the way in which he perceives creativity remains a strong influence on his practice; this suggests a strong sense of creative agency.

When asked to exemplify his creative approaches he returns to Mantle of the Expert approaches;

I have recently immersed myself in a Mantle of the Expert course and use this regularly in classroom practice. I enjoy the use of drama when teaching and encourage the children to represent their ideas/thoughts in differing ways rather than just writing/talking - art, dance, drama, speeches etc - I believe it is key to give every session a purpose, so the children's learning is purposeful.

As during his final placement, Mike shows evidence of approaching teaching creatively, to enhance pupils' learning. He goes on to say:

I believe that creativity ... begins to engage children's (and teacher's imaginations and self-motivation) opportunities to immerse themselves in learning experiences improves motivation, resilience and perseverance in a 'safe' environment. I firmly believe that if children are being given opportunities to develop their characteristics of effective learning, their performance also improves. My UKS2 [upper key stage 2] data reflects this too with a marked increase in

attainment since different teaching stimuli/creative contexts have been introduced.

So, this suggests that Mike sees creativity and performativity as compatible and not a simple either/or choice, in his current school setting. There are tensions with things like pupil targets, but he was finding this productive. He argued that creative approaches can enhance the performatively measured outcomes. Again, as he did when a student teacher, he used performative data to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of his creative approaches. It is arguable that the positive data actually forms a strong part of his sense of creative agency. When asked explicitly about that sense of creative agency at different points, Mike talks about the pressures of Year 6 statutory tests as an NQT.

I believe it [agency] was weaker in my NQT year due to working with 2 other experienced teachers who knew what worked for them and supported me through my first year in Year 6, where I felt a lot of pressure with SATs etc. However (now in my 6th year of teaching with many years being in Year 6) I feel much more secure in my pedagogy and willing to adapt and try creative teaching methods (as I did at University!) The ability to research different approaches, train in them and be shown trust by my head teacher to support my team in implementing them in their classrooms has reignited my sense of creative agency.

There are three significant elements here. First, the lack of agency he felt as an NQT, resulting from the combination of assessment pressures and inexperience. Secondly, the development and application of agency that grew with experience. Thirdly, as we saw in Mike's first interview, the importance of trust being placed in teachers by their leaders. As Mike sees his pupils growing and he gives them ownership in their learning, so he sees himself growing as he is given ownership of his creative teaching approaches. As he said:

You must have the willingness and trust in your own teaching abilities and creative knowledge to effectively embed a creative teaching and learning culture.

There is a sense here of both an acknowledgement of the importance of a sense of agency and a deep desire to see that working out in his professional practice. In contrast to the findings from Simon and Sarah, Mike seems to be experiencing a freedom in his teaching, as a qualified teacher, that they were not. It is significant, I would argue, that Mike is clear about how the school ethos and leadership were supportive of creative approaches to teaching and learning. There is evidence across the three participants that this can diminish or enhance individual teachers' creative agency.

### **5.1.3 Summary of findings: Mike**

Combining the analysis of the data from Mike's interviews, there is evidence to suggest that he has shown a growing sense of creative agency which has influenced his creative practice. He has shown an enduring passion for creativity and a desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative school climate. He has also been prepared to work in ways that challenge established norms in developing his creative practice, but at times has felt less able to do that.

Overall, there is evidence of his growing sense of creative agency and the influence and importance of that agency for his creative practice. Mike has shown a passion for creative practice. His sense of agency has grown over time, apart from in his first year of qualified teaching, when uncertainty and pressures related to statutory assessment, led him to follow more established practices in the school. We can see his willingness and desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate. Mike does not see creativity and performativity as incompatible or a binary choice. He appears aware of and focussed on the performative climate of his settings and on several occasions uses performative measures to justify his choices of creative practice.

He therefore sees creativity as a promoter of effective outcomes. He sees those outcomes in ways that are performatively measured and others that are not. He values both. Mike has also been prepared to work in ways that are different to the established norms in developing his creative practice. On final placement, Mike made some bold choices in the face of established classroom practice. He was helped in this by the supportive views of the school leadership. Then and since, his agency has grown much more strongly, where it has been supported by school leaders and can be justified or proven in its effectiveness, by performative measures.

Attention now turn to the second participant of this chapter, Sonia.

## **5.2 Sonia**

Sonia is a contemporary of Mike. She studied Primary Education between September 2009 and June 2012. She took up her first primary school teaching post in September 2012. Her interview was conducted during her final placement, in March 2012. Her email interview was completed in May 2018 by which time she had been teaching full time for almost 6 years.

### **5.2.1 Individual interview findings**

Sonia's face to face interview data was analysed as for the previous participants. Analysis of Sonia's interview suggested four significant themes. The first was her emerging agency as a teacher and the second was her taking ownership of what constitutes "success" in the classroom. The third was pupil ownership of their learning and the fourth was teacher accountability

Each theme will now be discussed. To begin, the first two themes will be addressed together as they interrelate.

### 5.2.1.1 Themes 1 and 2: Sonia's emerging agency. Taking ownership of "success".

Immediately after the focus lesson, but prior to recording the interview, Sonia said 'I would never have done a lesson like that last year in a million years'. This is referred to in transcript section 1. Asked why she 'would never have done a lesson like that last year' she immediately reflected on her own learning from the *Creativity in Primary Education* module. The key change in her thinking from that module learning, was to see success in ways that she had not expected or maybe planned. As context, the lesson was with year 1 pupils (aged 6) and had a focus on traditional tales e.g. Three little Pigs. The children were set a range of activities including art, story boarding, role play and puppet making. The following was a general explanation of her initial comment but refers to two boys (names withheld) who were set a task to retell a traditional tale in a series of pictures. However, they both chose to not do that and independently wrote a version of the story:

Well it was to do with my perspective, when I've like reflected on what I did in the module [*Creativity in Primary Education* APF] and I thought 'well how can I bring this [creative approaches] in and how can I not be as dictating everything that we have to do at the end; I've got to have seen this, I've got to have seen this or you've not succeeded'. If I had said 'I've got to see that you've done a Three Little Pigs thing', Child A and Child B would have thought 'well I haven't succeeded', but they have succeeded in their own way.  
(Transcript section 4)

Sonia went on to explain (transcript section 6) that previously, she had lacked the confidence to be comfortable when children responded to her learning activities in unexpected ways. This confidence she explained further:

Like confidence in my own ability as a teacher, as well as anything else, but confidence to say, 'well no I'm not going to sit there with a tick list and say 'oh yes you've done this, yes look at the success criteria''. Like I say, Child A and Child B ...they would have thought

‘well I’ve failed that lesson, I’ve not made a success of what she wanted me to do’. (Transcript section 8)

Sonia was clear that she felt the lesson was ‘successful’ (transcript section 9,10) but was clear that her perceptions of success had moved on from her previous placement.

Yeah, so like I could [last year] look through the work and go ‘well it’s got full stops and capital letters, right that’s what we’re looking for, right he’s got an adjective, that’s what we’re looking for’, like this big tick list of things whereas now I think ‘well I don’t...’, I haven’t got this creative tick list, I haven’t. (Transcript section 16)

Sonia’s confidence, her sense of agency, had developed in that she could see success beyond the planned success criteria. The pupils making unexpected choices in the learning, coupled with her teacher agency, meant that she *allowed* this to happen, rather than worrying that something was going wrong. These were clearly part of Sonia’s developing perceptions about creativity as a concept and practice. Transcript sections 23-26 show a discussion about the pupils’ unexpected choices and whether they represented indicators of success or something going wrong. Sonia’s response shows, how allowing those unexpected choices, were part of her perceptions of creativity and creative practice in this placement.

It’s something different, something different, which is half of what it’s about isn’t it, creativity, doing something different, something that surprises you and you think ‘well I wouldn’t have thought of that’, and I never for a minute thought they were going to sit down and do writing, but I suppose I’ve captured them haven’t I? If they want to work, then obviously I’ve done something right. (Transcript section 26)

There is a resonance here with Mike’s views about the value of unexpected learning and the arguments of Erikson and Erikson (2018) discussed earlier. But for Sonia, it is more a matter of her confidence to allow pupils to respond in unexpected ways. This forms a key part of her ‘active definition’ of creativity. That element of pupil

ownership, stemming from Sonia's growing sense of agency as a teacher, would seem to be part of her ownership of her teaching. Sonia's sense of agency, leading to a greater pupil agency, would seem to be a clear part of her perceptions of creativity and creative practice. It is to that theme that attention now turns.

### **5.2.1.2 Theme 3: pupil ownership**

In continuing to reflect on the comment 'I would never have done a lesson like that last year ...' (transcript sections 27-30), Sonia encapsulates how her own agency has led her to develop pupils' agency, as a key element of her developing creative practice. She talks about how, on her previous placement, she would have approached the 'Three Little Pigs' in a very uninspiring way. Talking about her final placement she says:

So instead of going about it in a really monotonous boring way I've tried to think, and I hate the saying 'outside the box', but I've tried to come away from that really straight line of thinking and think to myself 'how can I capture these in a way that's appropriate for you [the pupils] and it's still going to get the things that I want out of them'. So like the puppets, I could have said 'well here's a puppet and I want you to all go and write about it', which thinking about it is probably something that I would have done last year, as bad as that sounds. But this year it's been more like '*you* do it, *you* see where you're going to take it'. (Transcript section 30)

The key to the changes in Sonia's creative practice, was far from superficial. The key was to approach things differently by allowing these 6 year-old pupils, some ownership of their learning. This agency had developed, partly through her participation in the creativity module:

and I think that my, participating in the module, it's really hard but just...it's just made me more confident, it's just made me think, I still see that we can get those objectives but we can just go around it in a different way.

(Transcript section 30, immediately following the previous quotation)

And, talking specifically about the influences of the creativity module:

One of the things that strikes me was the ice [reference to a university session based on ice sculptures as stimulus for writing] and just thinking about a different way to get to that same objective but engaging them in a different way; for me a lot more this year it's felt like I've been able to use creativity to capture them a bit more.

So, a combination of allowing pupil ownership and agency and approaching learning in new and interesting ways, typifies her developing ideas about creative practice. Whereas Mike, in the previous case study challenged the norms of his placement classroom, Sonia was challenging her own norms, based on her previous experiences. What is clear in transcript sections 31-38 (below) is the comparison from Sonia's second, to her final placement. The changes were from a position where creativity would involve art, music, drama to something much more subtle, but much more meaningful. Again, as for Mike, my role as 'traveller' interviewer (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; as discussed in chapter 3) can be seen, rather than as totally disconnected, objective researcher. The insights are, I would argue, just as valid.

PR: what I've seen today is something much more subtle, and actually yeah we had drama today, and we had art ... but to me that's not what, that was...they were some of the vehicles for creating those creative opportunities for the children, but the creative opportunities weren't because it was the arts, it was because it was about choice, is that...?

Sonia: Yeah that's right because last year, I did think when I took [the] creativity [module], I thought 'oh gosh I'm really going to struggle here because I'm not the world's best artist, I'm not the world's best person at doing design technology, I'm not the world's best person at doing songs, having these big all singing and dancing lessons. And although it was a big, busy lesson, I think I've realised that it doesn't have to be this big hurrah that means...

PR: It wasn't flash. It wasn't a big 'daaa daaa' jazz hands. I don't mean that disrespectfully

Sonia: No. I know. But like maths we've done birthday graphs. Last year if you had given me that I would have gone 'here's one I made on the computer earlier'. This year it was like 'no way am I doing



that'... and I know that's only something small but to me that was a way of still capturing them but going around it in a different way, which is something I just wouldn't have felt okay doing last year.

Sonia's perceptions of what creativity in teaching and learning is, for her, is clear. It is not about flashy lessons or being focussed just on the arts. What is significant here, is not that her practice is seen as creative (or not) by others; that is unimportant. The significance lies in Sonia's own emerging ideas about creativity, that were giving her the agency to put these ideas into practice, for the benefit of her pupils' learning. Her engagement in her own learning about creativity in her course, had led her to reconsider her own ideas and practices, which she was now putting into practice, with her new-found confidence and creative agency. This articulation and application of her own developing conceptualisation of creativity would potentially place Sonia at odds with ideas such as Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) systems model or Gardner's (2008) creative 'mind for the future'. In these, the acceptance of ideas by a 'domain' is required for anything to be accepted as creative. Sonia's interview would suggest, that her developing conceptualisation of creativity was real for her and her class and that was sufficient validation for her to feel empowered in her developing creative practice.

When asked explicitly about how she would develop and deepen her creative approaches, Sonia was clear that pupil choice would be key:

I would bring in that choice a lot more and have these choice lessons where it's okay to go and do this (transcript section 40)

Also important, would be the confidence and freedom to be comfortable with unexpected learning.

As long as it's that thinking that you want, or maybe that you're not expecting, but I just don't see why it should be a problem [using creative approaches of greater pupil choice]. I just don't, I think as

long as you know you're going to get something out of it, no matter what you...if it's what you expect or not. (transcript section 54).

However, towards the end of the interview another aspect emerged; a confidence to back away as the teacher, almost to the extent of small pupil-teacher role reversals.

In the focus lesson, Sonia was about to question to a child who was sharing some work, but another child put his hand up to ask that child a question. The child (6 years old) then took a series of questions from the class:

PR: You really consciously stepped back and sat down, and you let Child C [name withheld] take over ...why, why did you do that?

Sonia: It's not mine, she's done it, I don't know what she's done.

PR: I mean what was underlying actually was step back, encourage the questions but not to the teacher, to the pupil, and you step back, is there a confidence in that?

Sonia: I think so, you've got to be confident enough to say 'here you go, have ownership of your lesson, you're stood up here, you take charge'.

PR: You have used that word ownership twice now.

Sonia: But we should have ownership, it should be that, it's their learning; it's that 'can we make the Three Little Pigs houses Miss XXXX?', 'Yes. Go on then, alright, let's make them'.

(Transcript sections 61-68)

What emerges is a strong sense of promoting pupil ownership, even to the extent of stepping back (in the lesson Sonia *literally* stepped back and sat down) to let Child C in charge of the questions and answers for a while. Asked if that lesson reflected her as a creative teacher she said 'yes':

Because it just had what I believe to be important, that they've got the ownership, they can choose, they can show me what they can do, and it's bringing it out of them as well...and I think being approachable as well, I think that's a part of it for me, I'm in that lesson, it's not 'I'm taking a step back', it's not 'you are the children

and I am the teacher and I talk and you do'. It's 'I want to sit down actually, and I want to see what you're doing'. (Transcript section 76)

So, there is evidence to suggest the importance of taking a step back as the teacher, allowing pupils some freedoms to approach learning in their way. As Fisher (2014) argues, in the context of creative teaching, 'voice' and 'choice' for pupils, alongside the use of imagination, originality and experimentation with alternatives, is what makes learning personal. Sonia shows her creativity as a teacher by letting go a little and giving her pupils some of that voice and choice.

This theme of pupil ownership was further explored, but in the context of performativity. This forms the final theme of the interview analysis; teacher accountability but within a context of a performative climate.

#### **5.2.1.3 Theme 4: teacher accountability**

As has been discussed in section 5.2.1.1, Sonia's growing sense of ownership of what constituted success, was an important part of her relationship with the performative expectations of her placement. She had a stronger sense than in previous placements, that intended learning outcomes for pupils could be seen in different ways, as she grew in confidence on her own judgement and sense of agency. Sonia was asked how the observed lesson represented her as a teacher. She talked about balancing structure and freedom of choice for her pupils; 'I know we've got to get the work out of them, but if they're not enjoying it what's the point?' (transcript section 56). Commenting further about balancing freedom and structure, Sonia refers to 'results':

Oh yeah, you've got to have some structure obviously, sometimes I would say I would prefer a little bit more structure, but it's just dependent. It is just dependent because I wouldn't see the same results produced in literacy ... I mean we do a lot of chatting, we do a lot of engaging and a lot of talk partners and literacy, but I don't

know if we'd get the same outcome if that was all the time, but I do believe that that's what I like to have as often as possible.

This seems to suggest that, whilst Sonia preferred an approach where pupil freedoms and choice were forefronted, she felt that this, if used all the time, may not achieve the expected 'results' in terms of pupil progress. Asked if a teacher can be accountable (for pupil progress) and give children ownership of their learning, she responded:

I think so, because yes, they've got the ownership, I'm still giving it some direction though, aren't I? 'Can we make the house?' 'Yeah but I'm going to help, I'm going to control it, I'm not going to let you go absolutely wacky and go running around the field collecting sticks to make this house'. But they had ownership, it was their house that they made that I oversaw, but I can still tell you which children engaged, and which children didn't engage as much. (Transcript section 70)

This suggests, that for Sonia, there is potential to be in control, accountable for pupil engagement and progress and still allow the pupils to have a degree of ownership.

This suggests a structured creativity, in the same vein as NACCCE (1999) and Starko (2015), who see imagination and originality applied purposefully (or appropriately in Starko's case) as an important part of creativity.

Attention now turns to Sonia's responses to the email interview, completed by all participants in May 2018, by which time she had been teaching for almost six years as a qualified teacher.

### **5.2.2 Findings from Sonia's email interview**

In this section, evidence from Sonia's email interview responses will be presented. Parallels will be drawn to the more detailed interview evidence, already presented, from her time as a final year student teacher. This will provide evidence as to the extent to which her views, practices, and sense of creative agency have endured, strengthened or diminished during six years as a qualified class teacher.

Reflecting on her current school, six years on, Sonia identified the needs of the children, her own developing views on creativity and the views of senior leaders as important factors that help her to now approach teaching and learning in her own creative way. That correlates closely with her views as a final placement student teacher six years previously, where pupil ownership and creativity to engage pupils was important for Sonia. Commenting on these factors she said:

My class have had 3 supplies [supply teachers] before I started in January ... They have such huge gaps in learning that their needs have to come first and planning things that interest them is crucial, as when I arrived they had such a negative view of education ... However I now feel that being creative is hooking my children into something that is interesting for them to learn about. So, I always look at it from that angle now - creativity in my school means making the children excited about learning ... The leaders are relaxed, letting me put my own stamp on the curriculum, and support any decisions I make about the way I want to run my classroom.

What is also clear here, is that the support from school leaders is important in allowing teachers to have a sense of agency. Conversely, reflecting on factors that hinder such approaches, Sonia again highlighted the needs of her class, Ofsted and lesson appraisals as important. She commented that:

Though the class help me be creative - they can also stop it. They need to go right back to basics some day and a lot of time can be spent teacher talking, addressing gaps and misconceptions. A blessing when they are interested - but Ofsted wanted pace! As above really nothing hinders me, I am in a supportive school but trying to gap fill desperately and pull these children to expected standard means sometimes lessons like maths have to be about 'hammering' the basics, rather than investigation tasks.

There is the suggestion of complexity here. The needs of the children in this class, coupled with perceptions of inspection judgements about 'pace' of lessons and expected standards, appear to be dictating forms of teaching, which Sonia would not see as creative or the way she would prefer to teach. She does, however, enjoy the support of the school leadership and appears to have a strong sense of agency in

her teaching. Asked how she approaches teaching and learning creativity now, Sonia points clearly to the needs of her children and the need to engage them in their learning: 'If my children are excited to come to school, I know I have planned creatively and met their needs.' She also however reiterates the 'balance' that she feels she has to achieve between what she sees as gaps in learning and a belief in the value of creative teaching. She said:

I plan things that I think will inspire and ignite a love of learning for the children. I look at the requirements of the curriculum, the gaps in learning in my class and try and find a happy medium between the two.

When asked about the importance of approaching teaching and learning creatively, in balancing these expectations of pupil progress in a performative culture of primary education, Sonia said:

Simply, if you aren't creative, what will the children learn? If we bombard them with test papers, who will remember anything? ... Some children have tripled their reading score when I scrapped worksheets for whole class read and found things that would excite them.

So, this suggests that, despite the pressures of the 'gaps' in learning that she felt she had inherited in her current school, Sonia sees creativity and performativity as compatible and not an either/or choice, in both her current thinking and school setting. It is worth noting, that performative data (reading scores) is used by Sonia to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of the more creative alternatives to worksheets. It is arguable that, as for Mike, the positive impact on data actually forms part of this sense of creative agency.

When asked to reflect on that sense of creative agency (I used this term) at different points in her career, she talks about her developing understanding during her creativity module and final school placement (SE3) as a student teacher.

I thought you needed a skill to be creative like playing a piano or making something out of nothing when I started the APF [creativity module]. Then I felt my understanding of what creativity meant to me developed by the end.

Reflecting back to her first post as an NQT, the pressures of being in a school 'solely focussed on progress and accountability' had a very detrimental effect;

In my NQT year I can now say I picked the wrong school. Solely focussed on progress and accountability, it was nothing short of a nightmare. I was told to do more exciting lessons and was once blamed for low attendance in my class (Y1) because my lessons weren't inspiring enough. I just lost all my self-confidence and I felt in a real rut.

'It was nothing short of a nightmare ... I just lost all my self-confidence and I felt in a real rut.' This would seem to be clear 2012/13 example of Ball's (2003) discussion of 'terror and soul'. This contrasts sharply with her reflections on her subsequent (and current) school setting:

Now I have moved from a school I spent 4 years at, learning from strong teachers with a lot of experience. I am confident in who I am and what I do as a teacher, understanding I still have a lot to learn, but I feel that my creativity has turned the attitudes of the children around in a short space of time. Had I been solely focused on getting them through a test so I got myself a point on a pay scale, I think it may have been a very different story.

There are two significant elements. First, the sense of agency Sonia felt as a student teacher. Secondly, the fluctuations of that sense of agency dependent on school context. It has grown most significantly, where experience has been in a supportive school, not solely focused on getting children through tests. Where this occurs, Sonia has been able to develop as the teacher she wants to be, use her creativity to engage pupils and make a significant impact on them. Sonia's words would suggest that she regards this sense of freedom and agency as significant:

I think you need to have that sense of who you are and what you believe to underpin everything you do. Surely that's what makes a

teacher. Anyone could stand up and recite facts and get them to recite them in parrot fashion for a test. Learning is something when we connect as teacher and pupil, something that they will remember for a long time.

There seems to be, in Sonia's views and experiences, a clear sense of Ball's notion of a teacher's soul, but one that is allowed to develop, by *not* allowing a performative climate to dominate and become 'terror'.

### **5.2.3 Summary of findings: Sonia**

Combining the analysis of the data from Sonia's interviews, there is evidence to suggest that a key element of Sonia's developing views on creative practice centred around the importance of pupil ownership of and freedom in their learning, and her ownership of what constitutes success. She showed her desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate, seeing creativity as a promoter of effective outcomes. She has a growing sense of creative agency which has fluctuated according to her different school settings.

There is evidence to suggest the importance to her of ownership of learning. This was manifested as a key element of Sonia's views on creativity. She saw this in terms of pupil ownership and freedom in their learning, but within constraints. She also saw this in terms of her ownership of what constitutes success. A significant part of her view on creativity, was to embrace success that was not planned for or expected. Her desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate is also clear. Sonia does not see creativity and performativity as incompatible or a simple either/or choice. Indeed, she sees creativity as a promoter of effective outcomes. She appears to see those outcomes in ways that are performatively measured and others that are not. She values both. Her growing sense of creative agency is evident. This has shown fluctuations, however. Since qualifying, the



influence of the school leadership focus has become more significant, in both promoting and restricting her freedom for creative practice.

This last point emerges as significant throughout the third case participant of this chapter, Evelyn, to whom we now turn.

### **5.3 Evelyn**

Evelyn studied Primary Education between September 2014 and June 2017. She took up her first primary school teaching post in September 2017. Her interview was conducted shortly after her final placement in May 2017. Her email interview was conducted in May 2018 by which time she had been teaching full time, for almost one year.

#### **5.3.1 Individual interview findings**

Evelyn's individual interview was analysed in the same way as described for previous participants. Analysis of Evelyn's interview suggested four significant themes. The first theme was the impact of senior leaders on her approaches to teaching and the second was her sense of creative agency. The third theme was her reflections on creativity and the fourth was her reflections on the tensions between creativity and performativity.

Each theme will now be discussed. The impact of senior leaders and school ethos on Evelyn's sense of agency and freedom to practice creatively was difficult to separate as they interrelated so closely. Therefore, I will discuss the two themes together.

### 5.3.1.1 Themes 1 and 2: the impact of senior leaders *and* Evelyn's sense of creative agency

From the beginning of the interview, Evelyn was clear how important the influence of senior school leaders was to her on her final placement:

[The school was] really supportive of my teaching style, which since I started creativity [the *Creativity in Primary Education* module] shifted very much towards the creative style. Really supportive, the head teacher was fascinated by it as well, we had lots of discussions about creativity, yeah and I felt that the ethos, the missions and the value of the school really supported what I wanted to do as a teacher and the way I wanted to teach ... the school really, really resonated with my philosophy. (Transcript sections 5 and 16)

However, Evelyn reflected on her previous school experience (SE2) where she had tried similar creative approaches based around drama. In that case (a lesson based on Jack and the Beanstalk) she received negative comments:

I did that [creative, drama based approach] as an appraisal as well, the comments in that appraisal, the exact same style of teaching that I did on SE3 are completely different, so the comments are things like 'you spent too much time discussing what you could do with these beans instead of teaching about planting beans' ... 'the lesson was fun, all the children loved it, but you could have done this and got it done a lot quicker'. (Transcript section 30)

There were also comments (same lesson) about pupil behaviour related to her creative approaches:

Some children has got so hooked on it, were so intrigued by these beans they went off and got really excited, and for me that was great, I was so pleased with that, they were engaged, they were really...really difficult children to get really engaged and really hooked on their learning ... one of the comments I got was that they were too excited, they were too loud ... but to me that wasn't a behaviour issue because they were engaged, they were learning, they were actively involved, but to somebody else they were being too loud and they were being disruptive. (Transcript section 40)

Comparing her SE2 and SE3 experiences, Evelyn summed up the positive and negative impacts of the school ethos/leadership on her sense of agency as a teacher:

The [second school placement] SE2 school was very much ‘this is how we do this so this is how you will do it, and this is what you will come out with if you do it this way’. My SE3 school was ‘this is your final teaching placement, this is where you really put your feet on the floor and decide what sort of teacher you are, so you do that, and we will support you in that’. (Transcript section 47)

There is evidence here to suggest a clear difference between her experiences in these two settings. In the first, she experienced a school ‘habitus’ (this is how we do this so this is how you will do it’; quoted above) and the apparent use of ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu 1990) as discussed in chapter 2. This was a controlling influence, arguably aimed at producing the ‘docile bodies’ (Foucault 1979) discussed in chapter 2, with the grading of the school placement, being used as the proverbial “carrot/stick”. In contrast, is her brief reflection (above) about the more empowering leadership on SE. This was, in her view, transformational (as seen below) as Evelyn reflected on her development from SE1 to SE3:

I feel that my difference in me as a teacher between year 1 [SE1] and year 2 [SE2] was good, you know I progressed. I think from year 2 to 3 [SE3] was massive, like I changed so much as a student teacher, I’m now so passionate about the way that I teach that I will defend it to the end of the earth, and in SE2 I was very passive, very ‘yes I’ll do this’. I think if I went to SE3 [in that passive way] I wouldn’t have been able to wholeheartedly teach with as much passion as I did, because I wouldn’t be doing the things that I believe are the best way to do it, I think I came out with those results [final grading as “outstanding”] because I justified what I did, I always reflected on it, I was passionate about it and I think that rubbed off on the children, and that made progress, good assessment results. (Transcript section 49)

Evelyn articulates a number of issues around her success on final placement. She does not simply state that she was graded as “outstanding”. She talks about *why*;

self-reflection; passion; inspiration of pupils; pupil progress. Of note is the *first* thing she says; 'I justified what I did'. She had, in her final placement, a strength of agency, to no small extent, bolstered by the supportive ethos of the school, which was in stark contrast to her very passive approach on SE2. Of note also, is the last thing on her list; 'good assessment results'. As for Mike and Sonia, Evelyn saw no conflict, in that setting, between performativity and creativity and uses performative results as part of her justification for her approaches. However, she also puts other, deeper issues before this. Again, this was in contrast to her previous placement, where performativity and creativity appeared to be more of a choice (with performativity taking precedence), rather than compatible features of her practice.

On her final placement, when asked, to what extent she felt the freedom to approach teaching and learning in her own creative way, she replied very positively;

'Very much so, I felt...I genuinely believe that this was a result of the school that I was in, in that I was very lucky in that the school was supportive of my creative style. (Transcript section 28)

She went on to describe how her creative approaches were embraced, to the extent that she led part of a staff meeting about the 'Mantle of the Expert' approach that she used. In a similar way to Mike on his final placement (section 5.1), this would suggest that Evelyn's creative agency developed beyond her own practice, empowering her to influence the practice of others. The opportunities and support afforded her by the placement school leadership, were crucial in this. Evelyn's final comment in the interview, when asked if there was anything else she wished to add, summed up this point saying;

Just that I never thought it [creativity] would be such a big thing, and I guess going back to the agency thing, I'm lucky I've had experience of where my creative agency has paid off and has shone through and been supported, I've always [previous placements] been in a situation where it hasn't. (Transcript section 74)

Evelyn's reflections on the impact of the school leadership extends into areas not covered by Mike and Sonia; her future employment. In transcript section 16, Evelyn talks explicitly about her passion for creativity;

'I never expected [before taking the creativity module] creativity to be like...for me to engage with it and be this passionate about it'. She goes on to say, 'and it started to make me think like 'what am I going to do when I apply for jobs?'

Evelyn then described visits to meet Headteachers of potential employing schools; some who were supportive of her passion for creativity, others less so. The crucial point is that for Evelyn, her new-found passion for creativity, lent her such a sense of creative agency, that it significantly impacted her quest for employment as an NQT. She sums this up, recounting a Headteacher's reply to her when she explained about her creativity module:

and the head replied saying 'well some things just have to be done, you can't flower everything up, you can't make it all look nice', and for me that put that school out of the question. I wasn't going to consider working there because of what she said, and I never, ever thought I would do that, like when I was looking for a job I never thought I would be saying no because they lack creativity, but it did, it really has impacted my job search. (Transcript section 18)

Such views from school echo research findings from Troman (2008). Researching in a set of primary schools, all with a test-based focus, 'creative projects provided important 'breaks from the National Curriculum' and opportunities for 'exciting' rather than 'boring' lessons (p.628). Creativity was a compartmentalised entity; an add-on to the serious work of the national curriculum. In a separate, similar encounter, Evelyn described her passion for creativity as 'frustratingly strong' (transcript section 60); frustrating because in a similar conversation with a Headteacher about creative approaches to teaching and learning, Evelyn concluded that

'I can't work in that school, that's not what I think', and that was annoying because I'm thinking 'this could be a job here'. Surely

having a job is more important than me being able to express myself and teaching creatively, but it wasn't. (transcript section 61)

When pushed on this point, Evelyn was clear (transcript section 62):

PR: So again, don't let me put words in your mouth, I just want to make sure I'm understanding you, it's that...when you're looking at jobs, being able to have that agency is becoming the dominant factor?

EH: Completely...After SE2 I had a view that no school, no employment, no job is worth me being unhappy, like I need to be happy where I work and going back to what the guys said at the learning conference, for you to be happy you need to feel that your way of doing something, whether that's in teaching or not, is supported, so I feel like I would rather wait and find the right job for me than take a job that I don't feel I will fit in, where I don't feel that I can improve and I can get better to the best of my ability.

This suggests that Evelyn's engagement with creativity as a concept and as practice, and the associated strengthening of her sense of creative agency, grew to become dominant factors in her thinking and practice as a final year student teacher and her employment decisions. It is also clear, that the resonant ethos of her final placement school, was as much a promoter of this agency, as the much less sympathetic ethos of her second placement school, was an inhibitor at that time.

However, Evelyn's reflections, a year later, on that more negative second school experience, would suggest that those negative influences on her sense of creative agency, have, in the light of her creativity module and final placement, actually added to her agency and determination to find a school where her creative ethos could find expression. Speaking about her sense of freedom and agency on SE3 she said:

It gets stronger, so from the start of SE3 to the end of SE3 it climbs like this big mountain, like it really, really becomes strong, but the only reason for that, and I don't like saying this, but the only reason was because of that social support, that acceptance and

encouragement of creativity, I'm thinking 'they really like this, this is great'. (Transcript section 58)

What was crucial for Evelyn, was the validation of her placement setting that empowered her to practice creatively. As will be discussed later, this was not a *carte blanche* to do whatever she liked, irrespective of outcome; the school had a strong performatively driven expectation. What was significant was the freedom that she given, to deliver those performative expectations. So, for Evelyn, SE3 not only put all the module learning and thinking about creativity into context but appears to have provided a defining experience that allowed her creative agency to develop. This can be seen in transcript section 60:

PR: So, is SE3, is that kind of putting all of that first semester [creativity module] into context?

EH: Yeah, me thinking there is actually a place for this, and I've done it, and I've come out as outstanding [final placement formal grade], so this is a great way to do it. So, I'm now at the point where it is completely making a difference even with jobs I apply for, and I never thought that would be the case.

Evelyn talked repeatedly of her passion for creativity in teaching and learning (e.g. transcript sections 14, 16, 24, 64, 74). When asked how important her sense of freedom was in enabling her to practice that passion her reply was clear:

Really important; if you don't have the desire or the drive or the agency to teach creatively ... I think you're lost, like you're not it justice if that makes sense ... you have to feel empowered to teach how you want to teach, and how you feel strongly about it and if that's creatively then your creative agency needs to be strong, it needs to be great. (Transcript section 65)

Attention now turns to discussing the third main theme from Evelyn's interview; her reflections on creativity as a concept and as a practice in teaching and learning.

### 5.3.1.2 Theme 3: Evelyn's reflections on creativity

Something of note that emerged from this interview, is the extent to which Evelyn thought about and reflected on the concept of creativity across her last year of her QTS course, underpinned by her creativity module studies. A lesson observation, as the basis for this interview, was not possible. So, early in the interview, Evelyn was asked to reflect on a lesson that typified creative practice for her. Interestingly, the lesson that she chose, she described as 'it could go both ways' (transcript section 9) i.e. it could be seen as being very creative, or not and could go well or not. The lesson was based on a book, the Story Machine. Evelyn made a big story machine, the children pulled pictures out the "machine" and, using a dialogue-based approach, developed a collaborative story. This reflects what Fisher (2009) describes as dialogic co-construction, where dialogue and creativity are seen be complementary. Evelyn encouraged the children to use their imaginations, inspired by the pictures. Reflecting on the planning of the lesson Evelyn said

So for me, when I was planning it I'm thinking great it's really creative, there's this machine, it's visual, you know it's original, it's unique, they're trying to express themselves in a way that is acceptable, because at the end of the day they are the author of this story. That was the point you know, you are becoming an author, you can take this story wherever you want. (Transcript section 9)

Commonly identified features of creativity are clear here – imagination, originality/uniqueness that are widely discussed in literature (e.g. NACCCE 1999; Starko 2014; Simonton 2018). What is also evident is a consideration of value or appropriateness, also a commonly highlighted feature in literature (e.g. Wyse and Dowson 2009; Sawyer 2014; Sternberg and Sternberg 2017). What is interesting here is that Evelyn's response suggests that the value or acceptability (to use her word), was to be judged by the children; 'at the end of the day, you [the children] are becoming an author' (transcript section 9). This view would be at odds with the likes



of Gardner (2008) and Csikszentmihalyi (1999; 2013) who would regard that judgement as being made by gatekeepers of domains and would need to change the way other people think and behave, in order to be deemed as creative; the big C discussed in chapter 2 (Craft 2005; Simonton 2018). What is noteworthy, is the suggestion in Evelyn's response, of her confidence to allow 5 year-old pupils to judge the acceptability of their creative choices. They were being given ownership and therein lay the core of the creative approach. It happened that this lesson was also the final formal appraisal of Evelyn's SE3; a key performative event. As Evelyn says, 'I taught the lesson as my final appraisal and it was all graded outstanding, and I was so pleased' (transcript section 9). As an indicator of Evelyn's thinking about creativity she goes on 'and I sat down and I thought like that's not creative at all' (transcript section 9). It would have been easy for her to have described what she saw as a creative lesson and added that it was also graded formally as "outstanding". Her actual reflections were focused around what she saw as the limitations that she imposed on the children (the pictures), which were intended as stimuli. The dilemma that she described, was between wanting to allow freedom and imagination, but feeling she needed to guide the pupils to ensure appropriate responses;

in my head I'm thinking 'I need to give them something or they're going to come out with something inappropriate, not great things.'  
(transcript section 9).

This suggests a tension, between wanting to promote what she sees as the features of creativity, that came out in her lesson description (questioning, originality, uniqueness, pupils' freedom of expressions and pupil ownership of learning: transcript section 9) and the need to ensure that their responses were appropriate. She saw this as her imposing limitations on the pupils. Whether these were limitations on, or stimuli of creative expressions, is not the point here. Evelyn's

ability to self-critique and her well-refined reflections on creativity and creative practice, are the focus. Although she ultimately left those judgements to the children, as discussed earlier, there is a sense of that performative struggle; because this was an appraised lesson, the appropriateness was open to judgement by the appraisers. The facilitative and empowering ethos of this school's leadership has been discussed at some length in section 5.3.1.1. There is further evidence here, to suggest that Evelyn, although she guided the session more than she later reflected she could have done, still felt the creative agency to allow the children to judge the appropriateness of their story contributions. What is arguably more significant here, is that the school leadership (the appraisers) also felt comfortable in pupils making those judgements and so graded the lesson as "outstanding".

Evelyn described this lesson as one that could go both ways, a phrase she also used later in terms of risk as she plans lesson (transcript section 14):

[planning] involved a lot of risk in that it could go one way or it could just go disastrously wrong, and I wanted the confidence to do that, in that that's what I want my teaching style to be when I have my own class.

The risk for Evelyn was not, as such, part of creativity itself, but were more about children's responses and her teaching being seen as ineffective:

I feel like there's a risk of the children not engaging, the risk of them not getting what you want, but I think the biggest risk is, that it won't be supported or recognised as an effective way forward. (transcript section 20)

Evelyn explains:

I think creativity is a journey where you start off somewhere, you're trying to get somewhere and it's about the things that happen in between, it's not about the thing that's produced, it's not about the end product ... I've learned so much about taking risks, I feel that I was lucky in that in my SE3 school they were very supportive of that,

if I said 'I want to try this, I'm not sure how it's going to go', they were like 'go for it.' (transcript section 19)

This reiterates the agentic impact of senior school leadership, in this case, positively. Taking risks is often seen as a feature of creativity, yet Tyagi et al. (2017) maintain that the evidence to support this is sparse. Students on my course often use the phrase 'risk taking' in talking about creativity. What Evelyn does here is to articulate the risk in her creative practice. Those risks are all related to pupil performance and the associated judgement of that learning and therefore her teaching. What is important here, is not whether risk taking correlates to creativity, as discussed by Wangbing et al (2018), but that Evelyn felt she had to take risks, all related to performative measures on her final placement, in order to have the creative agency to practice in the way that she saw as both creative and effective. Again, the link between the school leaders and Evelyn's practice of her conceptualisation of creativity was crucial:

In SE3 that was why I took time to speak to my head and say 'this is everything that I believe teaching should be, but obviously I'm aware I need to pass this', and I felt awful for doing it but I felt I was almost saying 'I need you to tell me you're okay with that'. (Transcript section 20)

In this context Evelyn identifies a crucial dilemma for herself. She refined her thinking over the time of her course and was committed to the application of this in her practice. She also was committed to qualifying with the best grades and so was very aware of the possibility of those who had judging powers over her, not being of the same mind.

I think unless you understand creativity in the way that I've come to understand it, it can look very, it can look and it can appear to be a lazy way of teaching, but a way that you might think 'she's just doing things that are fun for the kids' and things like that, so my worry was that it wouldn't be recognised...I didn't want recognition, that's the wrong word, I mean it would be approved by somebody who was in

a position to judge me, and therefore holds my final grade in the palm of their hand and could just say 'I don't believe this'. (Transcript section 22)

To have played safe would have been easy, but Evelyn was repeatedly clear that process is greater than product, in her ideas about creativity. Linking back to the ideas about creativity discussed in chapter 2, the production of something of value is common (e.g. NACCCE 1999; Howard-Jones 2008; Simonton 2018). Evelyn's interview would suggest that she sees the creative *process* as that thing of value:

So it wasn't a product in that the end product would be a story that the children wrote, it was the journey of getting to that story, ...and I've never done this but I've seen it being done, teachers say 'right we're doing some writing today, sit down, here's your paper', all that passion and all that good language, all the imagination is lost in the paper. (Transcript section 24)

For Evelyn, the process focus maintained and promoted the imagination and passion that she had seen inhibited in other school contexts. In the lesson being discussed in the interview, she didn't see the product as being especially creative (transcript section 26). She went on to reflect that the lesson, which was planned as a writing lesson, did not involve the children in doing any writing. However, her (risky) approach, using talk to develop writing skills, prioritised the process over the product and in doing so was exercising her creative agency which allowed her to take the risks that she perceived:

I was trying to make the connection between reading and writing, and the risk was that that wasn't recognised by the people who were appraising me, luckily it was because I was in a school that did support that, but I can imagine in another school for example, that might not have been the case, so I think that was the risk. (Transcript section 26)

Attention now turns to the fourth theme, creativity and performativity.

### 5.3.1.3 Theme 4: creativity and performativity

What emerged from Evelyn's interview, in the context of performativity, was more distinct from other student participants. Evelyn looked at this more specifically in the context of ITE performativity; how the performative expectations and demands, especially of assessed school placements, impacted on her creative agency as a student teacher. Reflecting on her final placement Evelyn talked about discussion with the school leaders saying

‘I'm aware that there are certain hoops that I have to jump through to get through this placement, and a lot of the lessons or activities that I had planned involved a lot of risk in that it could go one way or it could just go disastrously wrong’. (Transcript section 14)

The way that those school leaders supported Evelyn's creative agency has been discussed in the previous two sections. Evelyn took that notion of agentic empowerment further, reflecting also on her previous placement. She reflected on how a style of teaching in the second-year placement which was very similar as that of the focus lesson in the third placement, discussed earlier, received very different comments/appraisals (section 5.3.1.1. and transcript sections 30 and 40).

There is clearly only Evelyn's recounting of the feedback here. Putting aside judgements on effectiveness, the comments would seem to suggest that similar approaches in two different settings were perceived very differently. In one (final placement) the appraisers shared Evelyn's prioritisation of process over product and embraced the freedom, choices and imaginative expressions afforded to the pupils. In the other, appraisers seemed more focused on instrumental priorities such as getting things done quicker. The point here, is not whether one is right or wrong, or better than the other; that is highly debatable. The point is that one allowed Evelyn to practice with a far greater degree of freedom, because the appraisers were prepared

to give her more freedom. The challenge for ITE, and for me as a course director, is that Evelyn was in both those schools by chance. Inevitably, final placements being much longer and allowing a much higher teaching commitment, tend to have more influence on a student teachers' development. Evelyn reflected on what might have been:

In SE3 I wasn't stopped, I was able to express how I wanted to teach, but I can imagine being in a different school, I wouldn't have been able to do that, and I don't think that...I think that's a problem of the initial teacher education course. (Transcript section 30)

Evelyn's conclusion is inescapable and something of an "elephant in the room" in ITE; it is impossible to provide full equality of opportunity to hundreds of student teachers across hundreds of schools in any one university. Equality can be provided in terms of length of placement, provision of mentors, age ranges taught etc. But, at this micro level, equality cannot be provided in terms of the agentic empowerment of student teachers, by those who have mentoring and appraising roles over them during placement. Those power relationships may be very liberating for student teachers. They may however exercise the kind of normalisation of behaviours discussed in chapter 2, where examination (or appraisal in this context) acts as 'a normalising gaze' (Foucault 1979, p.184). and the monitoring of student teachers allows their classification and punishment (or reward). Throughout her interview, Evelyn was clear that her views on creativity, developed through her creativity module, were not only embraced by her final placement school, but also developed further, through that empowerment of her creative agency. She had a stark conclusion: 'I can't see that I would feel the same if I was in a different school' (transcript section 30). Reflecting on her final placement grading as "outstanding" in all areas of the Teachers Standards (DfE 2012) Evelyn reflects;

I really do think it goes back to who's judging you ... and their beliefs, in that what they think about good practice...it's hard to deny that that makes a difference, so I guess for me it's made a difference in that I've come out with outstanding ... but again I'm not sure how much of that is down to the way that the school I was in really matched [my beliefs]. (Transcript section 43)

From the perspective of ITE performativity, this suggests a spectrum of possibilities in the tensions between creative agency and performativity, that mirrors Ball's notion of 'soul' and 'terror'. Does a student, at one extreme, "sacrifice their soul", if it seems necessary to teach in way that they do not like, but they perceive will give them the best grade, because it conforms to the ethos of those exercising judgements over them. At the other extreme, does a student teach as they wish, within parameter of reasonability, safety etc. but risk a weak grading, if that does not conform to the appraiser's ethos. Evelyn clearly raised this issue. For her, fortunately, she was able to enjoy freedoms in her final placement and be able to be graded at the highest level. This was not the case in her second placement, where the situation was exacerbated by a mismatch in views of her class teacher (there every day but not responsible for formal appraisals and judgements) and her appraising mentor.

Evelyn clearly articulates the contrast.

On SE2 my mentor wasn't in the school [external mentor] , so she had a very different view of what made a good lesson to my class teacher, so when she wasn't here I taught in one way, and when she came in I would be like 'right I have to do this', and so to a certain extent I jumped through every hoop that she put up for me, in that I gave her what she wanted to see so that I got the best grade. (Transcript section 52)

Evelyn's perception was, that she felt compelled to practice in a particular way to achieve the outcome that she wanted. Arguably the 'terror of performativity' got the upper hand over her 'soul' as a teacher: 'I didn't come out of it loving teaching like I did when I went in' (Transcript section 52).

It may have seemed so far, that the Evelyn entered her final placement and just got lucky that the school was in sympathy with her ethos. To a large extent this was true. However, Evelyn revealed an initial agency, fuelled by the negative experience of SE2

In SE3 I was determined not to have that happen, so I went in with the mindset that 'I believe this, this is the teacher I want to be, so this is what I will do' and that's why at the start of SE3 I spoke to my head, I spoke to my mentor and said 'this is what I want to be as a teacher, will you support me in that, if I approach teaching like that does that fit in with the ethos?' Luckily it did, and that's how it went, so on SE3 everything that I did in my appraisals, the way that I taught, the questions I asked were what I did even when I wasn't being appraised.

So, Evelyn was allowed to work in her creative way, with no feeling that she was hoop jumping, simply to achieve the best performative outcome. The school had very high standards:

The standards at the school I was at were so high in the standards of teaching you know, assessment, progress, everything was so high and that really made me work. (Transcript section 50)

But. even in that context, her teacher's 'soul' prospered even in performative context, because performativity was not a 'terror'. As Evelyn went on (transcript section 50):

I never worked so hard for something in my life, but I feel that in the lessons that I taught, the way that I interacted, the questions I asked, all ultimately stemmed down to what I believed my teaching style was, and what I believed the best way to teach, to ask questions was, so I think my philosophy did shine through and I did what I felt was best.

To conclude this chapter. Attention now turns to Evelyn's email interview in May 2018 by which time she was close to end of her first year as a qualified teacher.

### **5.3.2 Findings from Evelyn's email interview**

In this section, evidence from Evelyn's email interview responses will be presented. Parallels will be drawn to the more detailed interview evidence, already presented,



from her time as a final year student teacher. This will provide evidence as to extent to which her views, practices, and sense of creative agency have endured, strengthened or diminished during her first year as a qualified class teacher.

Reflecting on her current school, one year on from her individual interview, Evelyn identified the general ethos of the school, the views of senior leaders and her own developing views about creativity as important factors that help her to approach teaching and learning in her own creative way. That correlates closely with Mike and Sonia's views. It also correlates closely with her views as a final placement student teacher one year earlier, where the empowerment of the school's ethos and the school's leadership were important for Evelyn. Commenting on these factors she said:

The school adopts a creative approach to teaching and learning which includes English and maths. Senior leaders are very on board with a creative approach and encourage this. My views about creativity make me the teacher I am, so this shines through in everything I do.

What is very clear here for Evelyn, is her sense of agency, but also the important role that the school leaders have in fostering that agency.

Conversely, reflecting on factors that hinder such approaches, Evelyn highlighted CPD opportunities and performance reviews. She commented that

‘there aren't many CPD opportunities surrounding creativity. Performance reviews tend to focus more on English and maths’.

As for Sonia, there is a suggestion of complexity here. Evelyn has been consistently clear that school leaders, for her, have been very supportive of her creative approaches. There is a contrasting element here, suggesting that, despite this support, the performative pressures on school leaders that prioritise attainment and progress, still come to the fore in performance reviews. The suggestion is, that whilst

the school leadership is happy to promote creative approaches, ultimately these have to lead to good progress and attainment in English and mathematics. What is more, Evelyn feels these pressures are, at least, some hindrance to her freedoms to approach teaching and learning in her own creative way. She has a clear sense of creative agency, but only to a point. Asked how she now sees creativity, she says

I am now much more open to the idea of creativity being achieved through the teaching of English and maths whereas before I believed it was relevant for the foundation subjects.

This would suggest, that in balancing the possible tensions between creativity and performativity, Evelyn is coming to terms with her real-world pressures related to the school's performative expectations of English and mathematics. However, she is still hanging on to her creative agency, in meeting those pressures. For her, in those contexts, whilst there are clear tensions between creativity and performativity, her sense of agency prevents them from being the 'terrors' suggested by Ball.

Performance reviews, seen as an example of the combination of observations and judgments that make up the Foucauldian 'examination' (Foucault 1979), may be having a hindering influence on Evelyn's creative freedoms as a teacher. However, there is evidence here, to suggest that she maintains a strong sense of agency:

My views about creativity make me the teacher I am, so this shines through in everything I do.

This allows her to make sense of how she practices. She is confronting the performative pressures in a way that has meaning for her; the tensions are productive. This suggests that Evelyn is showing Ruti's (2009) conceptualisation, explaining agency in terms of the extent of creative freedom that we have and the extent to which we can be 'the authors of our own meanings' (Ruti, 2009; p. 5).

Reflecting further on her sense of creative agency (I used this term) Evelyn reflected that her first appointment had enhanced what was a strong sense of agency at the end of her course (as discussed in the previous section). She offered a simple response:

My current school places huge emphasis on creativity and this has only increased my creative agency.

Whereas Mike and Sonia experienced a fluctuation of that sense of agency dependent on school context, especially as NQTs, Evelyn had experienced a more consistent development of her agency over time and context. The commonality with Mike and Sonia is, that agency has grown most significantly, where experience has been in a supportive school, not solely focused on getting children through tests. Where this occurs, Evelyn has been able to develop as the teacher she wants to be and use her creativity to engage pupils, making a significant impact on them, but also others. As she says:

If you show creative agency you are more likely to influence others to teaching in this way. You will create a creative teaching ethos.

What seems to be significant here, is an early career indication that Evelyn is beginning to build on her experiences of a positive, empowering school leadership and ethos through placement and her NQT year. We see here, evidence that Evelyn sees a role for herself in *creating* an ethos that supports creativity, not simply benefitting from one that already exists.

When asked about the importance of approaching teaching and learning creatively in a performative culture of primary education, she explained the importance she attaches to creativity, again, very simply, saying that 'creativity engages performativity'. Evelyn, as in her final placement, did not appear to view creativity

and performativity as a binary choice, but was experiencing a productivity in any potential tensions between the two.

### **5.3.3 Summary of findings:**

Combining the analysis of the data from Evelyn's interviews, there is evidence to suggest that she has had a consistently growing sense of creative agency, which has been very influential for her creative practice. She has a strong desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate and sees creativity as a promoter of effective outcomes.

Her agency has grown much more strongly, where it has been supported by school leaders. Evelyn would appear to have experienced the most consistently strong support for her creative approaches compared to the other participants in this chapter. Arguably this accounts for the strength of her views about the role of leadership support. However, the extent of this importance to her goes further, in how it informed her job search as an NQT. The evidence presented also suggests she is beginning to project that view herself, in wanting to help create a positive school ethos that promotes creativity, as well as benefit from such an ethos.

There was also evidence of her willingness and desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative climate. Evelyn sees creativity as a promoter of effective outcomes and strongly rejects any notion of a binary choice between creativity and performativity.

Attention now turns to the third and final analytical chapter. This focusses on a slightly different mix of a student teacher/NQT and two leaders of primary ITE.

## Chapter 6: The struggle for creativity: peaceful co-existence

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### Introduction

The theme of this first set of participants within my case study is “the struggle for creativity” but with a focus on situations of a more peaceful co-existence between creativity and performativity. The chapter will be approached a little differently to chapters 4 and 5. Here, there is only one student teacher participant from my own Primary Education programme, with data collected as for the previous student teachers. In addition, there are two ITE leaders as participants, me included. Chapter 2 was clear in that there has been no attempt to remove myself from the data collection, analysis and discussion in this thesis. The participants were all well-known to me, working closely with me as part of a small group final year module. In interviews I was not simply a detached, passive, objective interviewer, but there was an element of co-construction of knowledge which has been discussed in chapter 2. Further, as will be discussed fully in the final chapter, there are significant tensions for me as I investigate and critique the role of performative accountability on student teacher and teacher practice; as a leader in ITE, I am part of that apparatus. I am encouraging creative practice whilst simultaneously perpetuating a system of accountability entered around the professional qualification of QTS and the associated teacher standards (DfE 2012). For these reasons, I would argue that the inclusion of myself as a participant in the case study is valid. One other way this chapter is different is that Stuart, the student participant, was the first to respond to my moves to facilitate more creative forms of assessment in the focus *Creativity in Primary Education* module. For that reason, that element of creative practice in ITE will also be explored, as it adds a different dimension to the discussion of creative

agency in the performative ITE climate, to that of previous participants; there will be a focus on university based rather than school placement-based assessment.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide further evidence that suggests, that when students and qualified teachers develop a strong sense of creative identity and agency, their teaching and pupils' learning can flourish within a performative climate. The findings will also provide evidence to suggest how the participants' perceptions of creativity affect their agency and their practice.

In this chapter, in contrast to chapters 4 and more in line with chapter 5, the focus will be more on the potential of a strong sense of self-formation and agency in promoting creative teaching and learning. This chapter will also explore these themes from the viewpoints of ITE leaders. For the student teacher and the ITE leaders, key themes from interviews will be highlighted and discussed. The short focus on university-based assessment will then link together the student participant and me, as an ITE leader. For each participant, findings will be presented and discussed; connections will be made between them as they are presented.

The student teacher (Stuart) took part, in an interview during his final course school placement. He also completed a short email interview in May 2018, almost four years into his career. As for chapters 4 and 5, the interview sought to focus on how each participant worked out, in their professional practice, their ideas of creativity, explored in the course module *Creativity in Primary Education* and how they perceived and addressed any tensions between creativity and performativity. The ITE leaders' interview was in November 2017, immediately after part 2 of our 2017 Ofsted inspection of ITE in our university. The final element of data in this chapter, will involve critical reflection on the university-based assessment of the module,

*Creativity in Primary Education*, and the role of creative agency in both student and tutor in this assessment.

The first participant in this chapter is Stuart.

## **6.1 Stuart**

Stuart studied Primary Education between September 2011 and June 2014. He took up his first primary school teaching post in September 2014. His interview was conducted during his final placement in March 2014, immediately following a lesson observation by me. His email interview was completed in May 2018, by which time he had been teaching full time for almost 4 years.

### **6.1.1 Individual interview findings**

Stuart's individual interview was analysed in the same ways as the previous student participants. Analysis of Stuart's interview suggested three significant themes. The first theme is his reflections on creativity and the second theme is his reflection on the relationship between creativity and performativity. The third them is Stuart's confidence and sense of agency as a developing teacher.

Each theme will now be discussed.

#### **6.1.1.1 Theme 1: Stuart's reflections on creativity**

The lesson that preceded the interview was a Year 3 (7-8 year olds) science lesson about light and shadows. It was a very 'hands on', exploratory lesson, with Stuart explicitly placing the pupils in the role as scientists, with the key task of proving or disproving statements about shadows. The interview started with Stuart being asked to explain his choices of approach in his Year 3 science lesson about light and shadows. He immediately referred back to the module *Creativity in Primary*

*Education* and the views that he had developed (not what had been taught) as to the most important features of creative teaching and learning. He highlighted two key things; cross curricular working and what he called child empowered learning:

Child empowered learning, I just think provide them with a statement, give them everything they need then they can't just say yes or no, it's not a question, it's not a closed question, it's a statement, prove it, don't just tell me yes, tell me why, tell me how, show me and they use the equipment, ... it encourages them to think for themselves and act as a team. (Transcript section 4)

Asked further about child empowerment:

PR (me): Freedom, is that a part of that childhood power?

SA: Absolutely yeah, freedom to choose, they have a choice, I'm thinking about the Richard Gerver stuff [Gerver 2014], about his project would be 'great teachers inspire and empower' that's his quote, and what else am I thinking about? A.S. Neill, all those things with a child having choice out of what they're using, when are they doing it, that sort of thing; obviously it's not quite at that level, Anna Craft with her choice, so there's all those things buried into it.

Stuart was clear, that a key part of child empowered learning is the freedom that is afforded to them by the teacher. He referred to some theorists and practitioners that had been discussed on that module (A.S Neill; Anna Craft) and who Stuart perceived as advocates of pupil freedom. Exploring the idea further, Stuart was asked why he did not just save time in the classroom, by proving the scientific statement to the class. For him, creative teaching and learning was about more than just assimilating subject knowledge; he was also trying to develop a love of science and the investigative skills of a scientist.

There was a lesson for this [already prepared in] school, and it had a table already made with distance from the source, source type and it had a table ready for them, and every single child would have worked as a team to use a ruler, measure that, found out the shadow, but they're not contextualising it ... if it's all done for them already, how to set it out, how to work it out, how are they going to



resource, how are they going to be able to you know, solve a problem in the future.

As he put it (transcript section 13), 'why investigate something if you're given something at the start?' To do so, would negate the need to investigate. However, he saw that, not as time saved, but as an opportunity lost; the children's freedom would have been removed. For Stuart, focusing on more than just a simple knowledge-based learning outcome, was a key part of the freedom and child empowerment that typified creativity for him. So, the creativity in that lesson, for Stuart, lay in his idea of child empowered learning, which lay in the choices that the children had to make, to address the 'prove/disprove' task that had been presented.

What also appears as an important part of Stuart's creative practice, was his willingness to encourage pupils' creative expressions. Using an example from a history lesson, he talked about children's work that is unexpected (something that was discussed for Mike and Sonia in chapter 5). In that case, a child had written from a very unusual and humorous perspective. For Stuart, although he had initial reservations, he was comfortable with the unexpected nature:

He is just so creative, it's just, the story turned on its head, it's completely different to anything that I'd ever heard ... linking it back though to the success criteria and the personal objectives, I think as long as it achieves those things I would absolutely nurture it and encourage it ... That was very unexpected, your response could be something that's going to reject that ... I thought 'what will another adult think?' and then I thought 'actually, it's his creativity, it's still acceptable', and I thought encourage it, I was like 'tell me more'.  
(Transcript sections 20, 21)

Two reasons emerge for Stuart's willingness to engage with this creative expression. Firstly, was the recognition of value in children's learning and responses that are not what the teacher expected. In primary classrooms, the planning and sharing of intended learning outcomes is commonplace. Whilst Stuart would normally do this,

he was also recognising that an important part of his creativity was in accepting and encouraging learning and responses that lie outside of those preconceived expectations. The preconceptions articulated in teachers' presentations of intended learning outcomes, can serve to limit the creativity and actual attainment of pupils (Erikson and Erikson 2018). The second reason lies in the reflection that, as long as the success criteria for the lesson (as expressed in his planning) were achieved, he was comfortable that children could take different routes to that "success". These two could arguably be at odds with each other. The reality may be, that Stuart is trying to achieve a balancing act between his desire to promote creativity in teaching and learning and the expected performative focus of his placement; seeking a peaceful co-existence between creativity and performativity.

The other key element of creativity for Stuart, was cross curricular working. This is defined by Grigg and Hughes (2013; p.46) as 'knowledge, activities, skills or initiatives that are applied across the curriculum and not confined to one subject'. Stuart described a range of cross curricular links across science, design and technology, drama and English (transcript section 25). The actual links are not the focus here. What is significant, is how Stuart explains his rationale for cross curricular working. Several features emerge over transcript section 26-28.

So, we're doing Mr Stink [children's story], again that's child empowering learning, that was a choice from them ... so I planned sheds. I don't know if you saw them outside our classroom, that's our class' shed, the children had never held a saw before ... By the end of that second week every single child in groups had a finished shed, I think that is incredible, I think high expectations achieved that ...so that was cross curricular because it linked the maths together and DT together, in the four rules we didn't do it how we normally do, we turned it [the shed] into Raj's shop which is a character in the story, we gave out differentiated products in the shop for them to buy and sell and all those things, so that was across curricular, so I think it can be done. (Transcript section 28)

Firstly, for Stuart, if carefully considered, cross curricular working allows meaningful connections to be made across areas of learning. Secondly, he perceived it as offering greater opportunities for pupil choice and the previously discussed child empowered learning. Stuart went on (transcript section 28):

But I just think that week for teachers was much busier and more stressful, they're a bit like complacent so yeah, so I think that would be the issue with making it creative all the time and doing all those things, it would take more time and probably effort.

Thirdly, it allows (and he acknowledges that this often means a greater planning workload on teachers) more opportunities to do things differently to the norm. In that respect Stuart returned to the idea of balancing approaches, such as this, to avoid causing excessive workload.

The overriding justification is similar to that seen in chapters 4 and 5; that creativity is a good way to achieve the performative results that are generally expected in schools. When asked directly, 'what is it about your version of cross curricular that makes it such a strong part of your view on creativity?' (transcript section 26) his immediate reply is very clear:

I think, obviously at school I would say the most important thing is progress, not creativity, so I would say creativity is my favourite way of achieving progress, and I think it's a way that I think children can progress. (Transcript section 26)

It is significant, that approaches regarded as creative, across of the participants, have been justified or rationalised in terms of their contribution to performative measures. Whether this is "right" or "good" is not the focus here. The role of ITE leaders in this, for example through focusing explicitly and consistently on pupil progress, will be discussed in the ITE leaders section later in this chapter. It does, however, lead directly into Stuart's second theme, creativity and performativity.

Attention will now turn to this theme, exploring the interrelationship between the two, sometimes competing foci.

### **6.1.1.2 Theme 2: Creativity and performativity**

One of the key reflections that Stuart made (touched on in the previous section), was that, in his experience, the relative focus on creativity and performativity shifts towards performativity as children progress through primary school. Speaking about his placement at the time of the interview (year 3) he said;

So I think I'm not bothered for this lesson how they got there [achieved the intended learning outcomes], I just want to know that they're trying to get there and that's their aim, so everything they're doing is to get to that objective and they're using the success criteria. (Transcript section 6)

However, when asked directly if he saw any tensions between his desire to promote freedom and child empowerment, and his desire to focus on the performativity of pupil progress and intended learning outcomes, his answer was clear;

Massively, and I think that gets worse and worse as you get towards year 6. (Transcript section 7)

He reflected on his previous placement in Key Stage 1 in an infants' school, saying it was

absolute child autonomy, it was free flow sort of thing, all the way through to year 2 apart from phonics and maths that they do every day. (Transcript section 7)

In his current school, a junior school, he offered a contrasting view:

But here I think because they have their national expectations and age-related expectations and the SATs [statutory assessments] and everything like that, there is a push, mainly with maths, English, science and reading, to get to a certain stage. (Transcript section 7)

Still in transcript section 7, he goes on, however, to say something, that is arguably quite surprising:

...so, I don't think you can mess around, you can't carry on with the child empowered learning for good without there being a focus of what they're trying to achieve.

There is arguably something of a contradiction here, or maybe just the tension that Stuart highlighted earlier. Stuart uses the phrase 'mess around' which seems to refer to his idea of child empowerment, a central feature of his conceptualisation and practice of creativity. However, he also states (section 6.1.1.1 and transcript section 26) that 'creativity is my favourite way of achieving progress'. Stuart goes on to try to explain this tension. He clearly still believed in his underlying ideas:

I'm still seeking all of that, the philosophy that I had last year on placement, with the child empowerment because I'm a really strong believer in that. (Transcript section 8)

However, his reflection is, that there is a shift in the balance between the freer learning in Key Stage 1 and the more structured learning, increasing through Key Stage 2, as a preparation for statutory assessments and secondary school. He appears to simultaneously recognise the tension, but not see it as too much of a problem. His resolution of that tension is 'I think you need a healthy balance equally in the school day' (transcript section 8). He exemplifies this, saying that the lesson observed had much free choice, but the next lesson would involve revision of the key subject knowledge. A maths lesson may have elements of teaching strategies but also investigations with more freedom. Whilst this is not especially radical, it does suggest an awareness and response to what he sees as the changing performative climate and expectations across (especially) Key Stage 2. It also suggests a sense that he is living and teaching with a degree of peaceful co-existence between creativity and performativity.

The issue of balancing freer, with more structured teaching and learning was pursued. Stuart reflected how his view of this had changed, as he had changed year group on placement. His view was, that in looking from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and moving on towards Year 6, the shift changes to much more structure because of performative pressures. In fact, he seems to agree with this move saying, 'it's all stage related, it needs to be, it does need to move eventually to performance focus, to prepare you for work' (transcript section 16). Having said that he reflects on his placement age group saying,

... that's why I absolutely love year 3 at the minute because you've got the healthy balance between part child empowerment and part "sit down, this is what the whole class is going to do." (Transcript section 16)

He exemplified this balance with mathematics. Teaching calculations, he used part whole class teaching of calculation strategies and part child empowerment, where the children have choices over the level of complexity at which they work:

I think that's creative teaching because it gives children choice, again it empowers them to choose which question they use, which ones to go for, which ones they're going to strive to achieve next, but they've also got autonomy over the targets and things like that. (Transcript section 16)

This would suggest that Stuart was able to balance what he saw as creativity e.g. child empowerment, choice, autonomy (e.g. Craft et al 2014; as discussed in chapter 2) with the performative agenda of pupil targets.

Stuart also reflected on the role of ITE's performative agenda and its influence on his practice. He reflected specifically on how he would have taught the observed lesson differently, if I had been there in my more usual role as an assessor of his teaching, carrying out a formal appraisal as part of his placement assessment and final grading. I highlighted that whilst the lesson had a lot of freedom and 'hands on' work

for pupils, it also had a sharp focus on proving the statements and recording their investigations. Whilst this was presented as a positive comment it was not, as stated earlier a judgement on Stuart's teaching. Stuart made a really interesting reflection:

...but I think if it was an appraised lesson ... and you really know what you're talking about, I think I would have been even sharper on that, I would have had a format for them to fill out, I would have had them writing a prediction, drawing an investigation, a diagram, talking about the method and then the conclusion; it would have been there as proof and everyone would have had probably three different sheets to do that. (Transcript section 9)

For him, the performative pressure of formal lesson appraisal, would clearly change his practice and not in a way that he liked:

I did that in my appraised science lesson, which was fine, it ticked the boxes for that, but I wasn't happy with it because for me it was too rigid, it was too 'everyone must draw a torch in this way'. (Transcript section 9)

Whilst I could take it as a compliment, that he felt free to teach in his own way as I observed, it is important that I recognise that I am a key part of the ITE performative apparatus, that clearly made Stuart feel he had to do things differently in the case of a formal lesson appraisal. Again, this tension in my own values and practice will be picked up in the final chapter.

Following on from this, towards the end of the interview, I asked Stuart if there was anything else, he wanted to add. He asked me which part of the lesson I thought was the most creative. I am mindful here that the response was from me not Stuart.

However, as discussed in chapter two and earlier in this chapter, my role as researcher is not wholly objective, and there has been a clear role of co-construction of knowledge through the interviews. Across transcript sections 43 and 44 I talked about one particular strategy, where the pupils had freedoms to choose investigations and roles around tables. However, I used this as an example of how

Stuart balanced pupil freedoms with a sharp focus on learning outcomes. I said (transcript section 44):

That is what I think you did very well there, it wasn't the kind of lesson that on the face of it was wildly creative, but I think there's, I think what comes out is a depth of less obvious creativity.

For me, there was depth of creativity in Stuart's practice that was not immediately obvious. The lesson was not flashy, but it did reflect Stuart's personal, active definition of creativity, in this case focussed on child empowered learning; his phrase. There is evidence here, of the value of collaborative roles (here, interviewer and interviewee) and illustrates arguments on the values of reflexivity in research (Attia and Edges 2017; King and Horrocks 2010; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Stuart went on to refer to Dorothy Heathcote and her drama-based approach to creative learning, the Mantle of the Expert<sup>2</sup>. This is a well-known and widely used approach that we had introduced in the creativity module. *Between us*, we reflected that it was unlikely to be an approach that would be used very frequently, as its value could diminish through over familiarity. However, this led Stuart to articulate his approach to planning for teaching and learning on school placement. This reflection was in some respects, rather stark, and suggested the constraining influence of performativity in the school context but also and clearly, in the context of ITE.

Yeah this is what I mean [i.e. not using overtly creative approaches all the time], so I think...there's two reasons why I think in the way I do when I'm planning, one is I think of trying to tick the outstanding on the appraisal documents, that's one because obviously that's what I've had to work to all through uni, so progress is number one,

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<sup>2</sup> Mantle of the Expert, an immersive drama-based approach to teaching and learning, developed by Dorothy Heathcote and which Stuart experienced as part of the Creativity in Primary Education module. See <https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/>



so in my opinion it needs to have a sharp focus because I need to show progress. (Transcript section 45)

I do not believe that anybody can reasonably criticise Stuart for wanting to be graded as 'outstanding', against the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) for his final placement. He was an ambitious, motivated student who always wanted to achieve the best. What is open to critique, and will be picked up in the final chapter, is whether such exercise of power relationships is 'right'. In chapter 2, Foucault's (1979) notion of 'correct training', which combines an observing hierarchy (here, a lesson appraisal) and normalising judgements (the standards against which Stuart was being appraised). Foucault describes this examination as 'a normalising gaze' (1979, p.184). The combination of surveillance, monitoring and a school or ITE culture of performativity and accountability can shape the practice of teachers. Stuart clearly felt pressure to teach in some ways that, quite literally at that time, enabled him to have the outstanding boxes ticked during appraisals. As Perryman et al. (2018; p.145) argue:

Conformativity, discipline and normalisation are achieved as teachers learn to police themselves and to perform the successful inculcation of the normalised behaviours.

It is noteworthy, that from September 2018, this appraisal form was dropped in favour of a simpler, far less prescriptive form. The main drive behind that was a recognition within our ITE team that the original form was potentially driving students to particular forms of practice (as seen in Stuart). It is also perhaps ironic, that an additional part of that drive for change, was the same reflection (not captured in their official report) from Ofsted during our 2017 inspection.

Whilst Stuart was reflecting on how he planned for a balance of freedom and focus, such a grading, he felt, could be a creative advantage. I asked him why he felt he

had been given the freedoms that he so greatly valued, whilst teaching in somebody else's class on this final placement. In transcript section 24, Stuart identified three factors. Firstly, the class teacher knew he had been graded as 'outstanding' on his previous placement. Secondly, she had seen him teach and his capable control of the class. Thirdly,

because I've proved things at the start, I've done it how the school do it, I've shown that I can do that at the same standard, I think she's let me sort of take the reins now and add creativity.

The performative agenda of ITE is again evident. However, Stuart's freedom and creative agency, grew partly out of that performativity (previous placement grading) and the confidence of the class teacher that he built in the current placement. This leads into the final theme from Stuart's interview, his growing confidence and agency as student teacher.

#### **6.1.1.3 Theme 3: Confidence and agency**

There was evidence to suggest Stuart's confidence in his teaching from the outset of the interview. This this has been reflected in the way that he discussed his clear conceptualisation of creativity in section 6.1.1.1. So, Stuart was asked about the professional confidence that was required to approach teaching in his own way, especially in a placement classroom. He reflected how that confidence had grown to the point, where he could approach teaching and learning in the creative way that reflected his own values and beliefs. As Stuart reflected:

there's no way I would have done that at the start of my block ... At the start I feel like I suppressed it [his creativity] completely... I didn't dare go away from what the school was already doing because there's four classes in year 3, I was just one, I didn't want them to be doing something entirely different to the other three classes in case they [his pupils] weren't learning the same information and progressing at the same rate.

This validation from other teachers was important, as it allowed Stuart to develop his own approaches. He had to plan alongside three other teachers, but there was evidence to suggest that his confidence and sense of agency grew, to the point where he took some initiative to pursue teaching in his way:

But then a couple of weeks in I said 'what would you think if I did this lesson?', I can't remember what it was, it was a lesson where I just had a completely different idea of how I wanted to do it to how it was done, and the class teacher said from then 'as long as you do each objective each day that we've got, you can do what lesson you like', so since then gradually I've turned it more into investigational all the time. (Transcript section 19)

He was still subject to the intended learning outcomes that were common to the four parallel classes, but he had the freedom within his own classroom to promote freedoms for his pupils. The week of the observation and interview, Stuart felt, was the culmination of this emerging agency:

It's been them [the pupils] finding things out, telling it to me, teaching it to other people and that sort of thing, so I think this week has been the most...I've done more of my values this week, I've achieved more than I think I did at the start. (Transcript section 19)

His use of the word 'values' is significant. This resonates with the conceptualisation of agency that Ruti (2009) defines in terms of creative freedom, self-formation of meaning and the ability to 'escape the dominant sociocultural structures that surround us' (Ruti 2009; p.5). Over time, Stuart had developed the confidence to approach teaching and learning in ways that provided pupil freedoms and empowerment; the keys to creative teaching and learning to him. Within his school context, Stuart was creating his own meaning and, to an extent, working outside ('escaping' is probably an overstatement for Stuart) the norms of practice for the school. or at least the team of teachers of which he was a part. In Ruti's terms,

Stuart was experiencing an appreciable degree of agency, especially towards the later stages of the placement.

The balance between confidence and hesitancy, between agency and conformity was a recurring thread in the interview. Illustrating those tensions, whilst reflecting on teaching music from the 1930s and 1940s, Stuart said;

I've had them doing all sorts of things, pacing round the room stamping on the floor, all sorts of things, and I just think it was completely creative but sometimes I think 'if an adult walks past what will they think? Do they think I can't control them or do they think I'm doing it on purpose or have I gone crazy', that sort of thing, but I think it's me, that was me being most comfortable with them ... that's them being creative, that's them completely immersed in it.  
(Transcript section 22)

So, for Stuart, there was a journey towards creative agency. Both his own confidence and the validation of school leaders were important in that. It is interesting to note that the influence of school leaders has been significant in all six participants so far. Those influences appear to have been both positive and negative in terms of the performative pressures on and the creative agency of the student/qualified teachers. This will be discussed fully in the final chapter.

In a very pragmatic way, Stuart also reflected on the need, as he saw it, to build up gradually towards approaching teaching and learning with the creative freedoms that he desired. His knowledge of the children's needs, behaviours and attainment levels were all important precursors to allowing the child empowered learning that he wanted. As he said (transcript section 23)

'like a lesson like today, if you didn't know the children could work independently. I don't think...it wouldn't be advisable to do it.'

So, for Stuart, it would seem that creative agency is something that developed, partly though his own clear vision and values about what creativity in teaching and learning

involved and partly through the agency afforded to him by school leaders. Glaveanu and Tanggaard (2014) talk about creative identities as 'individual projects of social origin (p.19); they are dynamic and develop over time and in different contexts.

Stuart's identity and the associated creativity and freedom in his teaching, were developing over time and very much related to the social (school) contexts in which she was teaching.

Stuart's self-confidence and independence of thought was suggested elsewhere in the interview. In a discussion about, what was then the new National Curriculum (DfE 2013), he offered a view that was somewhat contrary to the more common view, that it had taken a rather antcreative direction (Harris, 2015; Flood, 2016). He articulated (across transcript sections 34 – 40) an optimistic view of the new curriculum, seeing it as something that set out clear subject knowledge, but would still allow freedoms to focus on skills development and creative approaches. He was critical of what he saw as some of the common criticisms:

there's always somebody slagging off like Gove [Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education at that time] or something like that isn't there. (Transcript section 33)

He was also critical of his own school's plans to continue teaching some areas of history for example, that were no longer part of the new history national curriculum at Key Stage 2. The driver there, appeared to be a lack of desire to do something new and in a new way. Stuart was 'excited' (transcript section 35) about the new national curriculum because he saw it as something of a clean state.

In some ways I think when I start it would be nice to have it fresh, that would be my thinking, wouldn't it be great to start a career [he was due to start his NQT year later that year] where it's 'this is brand new, let's try it out', so that I would get as much say in something as somebody more experienced (Transcript section 39)

Stuart seemed to be seeing agentic potential in the new national curriculum, which was not the dominant view of the time. He reflected forwards (transcript section 50) to getting his own class as a qualified teacher and having more freedom and creative agency:

will every lesson always be introduction, then input activity, creativity for me? ... why can't I do a plenary in the middle ... investigation why can't you do it until the end of the lesson, things like that, and carrying stuff over lessons ... that's for me what will change ... I can't wait to get my class now, I think the classroom environment is going to be the main thing for me ... I'm just going to love the sort of, set it up, I am going to do it even if none of the others do it ... little things for their creativity to come out.

He was looking forwards to the time when he could pursue his values-based approaches, even if others did not.

Across transcript sections 29 – 34, we discussed whether and how his overriding views about creative practice and the need to balance these with a strong learning focus, made teaching and learning better. Stuart clearly believed that they did for several reasons. Firstly, they engaged the children in learning and allowed him to teach with passion, putting his all into his lessons. Secondly it allowed the development of skills and not just subject knowledge. He saw this opening up potential for his pupils to apply that widely, in and out of school, contextualising the knowledge with everyday life. Knowledge without the development of skills and the opportunity to contextualise it, he saw as pointless:

What is the point in teaching knowledge in isolation of skills... if you can't contextualise it with everyday life... there's no point in learning it in the first place. (Transcript section 34)

Perhaps the reflection that best sums up Stuart's strong and optimistic sense of creative agency, was part of the response to the blunt question about whether his creative approaches made for better teaching and learning:

If I do those things it means I live and breathe it, I believe in it, I'm passionate about it, I think if I can do that, I can motivate the children and inspire them to do the same thing, so I think it comes through me and through my resources and all those things, my creativity, my interest in art, music, all those things, put that into the lesson and they will soak it up. (Transcript section 29)

I would argue, that at this point in his career, Stuart very much represented the 'soul' of the teacher (Ball 2003), working as agentically as possible in placement setting: 'If I do those things it means I live and breathe it, I believe in it, I'm passionate about it.' He was not immune to performative pressures as we have seen, but he was not experiencing the 'terrors of performativity'.

Ruti (2016) discusses Lacan's view of defiance: 'Lacan implies that any subject who resists normative forms of desire by choosing to pursue the thread of its distinctive desire, qualifies as a defiant subject' (p. 206). The normative form of desire for QTS student teachers in my experiences, is often to be graded as highly as possible on placement. Stuart was not primarily forefronting his own placement grading (the normative form of desire), but rather his passion for creative teaching for his pupils' benefit (his distinctive desires). Whilst I would not rush to categorise Stuart as 'defiant', there is a sense here, that his growing agency was allowing him to pursue teaching in his way, increasingly when that was different to the ways of others in the school. It is noteworthy that this did not compromise his placement grading, which was 'outstanding'.

As for the other participants, attention now turns to Stuart's email interview, four years into his career.

### **6.1.2 Findings from Stuart's email interview**

In this section, evidence from Stuart's email interview responses will be presented. Parallels will be drawn to the more detailed interview evidence, already presented,

from his time as final year student. This will provide evidence as to extent to which his views, practices, and sense of creative agency have endured, strengthened or diminished during four years as a qualified class teacher.

Reflecting on his current school, four years on, Stuart identified his own developing views on creativity and CPD (continued professional development) opportunities important factors that help him to now approach teaching and learning in his own creative way. Reflecting further on this he commented:

I have been on some incredible courses at the STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics] centre in York and also been part of the Maths Hub in Doncaster. Although these have been focused on maths as a discrete subject (I am maths lead at the school) they have still been really useful in developing my understanding of how to teach creative maths. This does conflict with my previous understanding of creativity being fluid and across subjects (not taught in isolation).

So, there is evidence here, to suggest that Stuart's perceptions of creativity have been challenged, and he is embracing new creative ideas. Arguably this suggests a greater creativity, than if he simply sought validation of earlier ideas. Conversely, reflecting on factors that hinder such approaches he highlighted pupil progress targets, the needs of his class and the general ethos of the school as significant. Commenting on this, we start to see how his creative agency has taken a bit of a 'hit':

Year 6 and SATs [statutory tests] preparation for the last 4 years has taken its toll on my creative approach. Children have standards to meet and sometimes they just need to learn the 'trick' or the facts to get them through [the tests]. Needs of the class - This year in particular has been very tricky. I have had children with extreme behaviour and often this means that my approach has to be simpler and less creative with more structure in order to keep children on task. Our lesson appraisal pro-forma is quite prescriptive in what the observer is looking for and still has elements which are not conducive to a creative approach.



Reflecting back on the previous section of this chapter and the discussion about the ITE lesson appraisal proforma from 2014, there is a real irony here. In 2018, Stuart still feels that he is being constrained in his creative practice by a prescriptive lesson appraisal document, albeit a school one. There is also evidence to suggest that statutory Year 6 testing is playing a significant role on constraining his forms of teaching. He does, however, stay true to his core beliefs about creativity (articulated very clearly in section 6.1.1.1) when he can. He cites 'cross-curricular links where possible between foundation subjects and core subjects' and 'giving the children some degree of autonomy' as the broad approaches to creativity that he uses. Although the opportunities appear diminished, compared to his final placement, his core values and practice with regards to creative teaching and learning, where possible, have remained quite stable.

Asked to define creativity in his own way now (his 'active definition' of creativity) an interesting reflection appears:

This is difficult to write as I have read my statement from [my final year at] YSJ and how much I believed in a creative approach and how I would strive to implement this on a daily basis. I am moving years next year to year 3 and I MUST ensure that I implement a creative approach to teaching and learning. For me, creativity in school should be children utilising knowledge which has been gained (or mastered) previously and being able to apply it in a free and fluid way to a new concept. It may involve teamwork and discussion.

At the time of his final placement, as discussed earlier, Stuart reflected on how he saw creativity diminishing for pupils across Key Stage 2. At that time, the view was based on limited experience. Four years into his career, his view appears to be the same. As he anticipates a move back to year 3 (the age group of his placement) for him there seems to be an urgency and an imperative to reclaim the agency he once felt:

I MUST [Stuart's emphasis] ensure that I implement a creative approach to teaching and learning.

It would seem also, that there is something of a sense of frustration at having that freedom curtailed to an extent, by the performative requirements of teaching older Key Stage 2 pupils in that school.

There is, in one sense, a strong correlation to his interview responses from four years previously: creative freedoms are strong in Key Stage 1 and year 3 but diminish across Key Stage 2. The way in which he perceives creativity remains strong, but he does not appear to be experiencing the agency to put that belief into practice in the way he wants to; his creative agency appears to be frustrated to a significant extent, by teaching year 6 pupils, who are subject to statutory testing.

Stuart was asked explicitly about his sense of creative agency (I used this phrase). He talks about the pressures of Year 6 statutory tests and the pressures as a Junior School of moving children on in their data outcomes, having received data from a separate Infants School.

We are a junior school, so the pressure is on from the data received each year from the infant feeders. School data and performance in the core subjects. A major emphasis on maths and English for the entirety of year 6.

We saw earlier, the growing sense of agency he felt and the application of his agency, that grew with his final school placement experience. But now we see the decline of that sense of agency over four years of teaching in upper Key Stage 2. This perhaps illustrates the earlier urgency that Stuart articulated, to reclaim that creative agency and teach creatively again, as he so clearly wishes to; the opportunity he saw lying in a move back to a year 3 class. He expects a less performatively driven restriction to his teaching in this age group. As he says:

Next year (in Year 3) I am going to be a pioneer in this at my school and ensure planning is centred around creativity.

This shows signs of the creative optimism he felt at the prospect of taking on his first class. Whilst that optimism was not fully realised in practice, for Stuart, the realities of creative freedom lie with younger rather than older primary school pupils.

When asked about the importance of approaching teaching and learning creatively in a performative culture of primary education, Stuart said:

It is totally what I believe in. I wrote my teaching philosophy [assignment] in Year 3 at uni which was centred around child autonomy and a creative, cross-curricular approach. It makes children enjoy education more as it becomes relevant and practical and therefore, they achieve better as a result.

So, this is evidence to suggest, that Stuart sees creativity and performativity as compatible and not a simple either/or choice, even in his current school setting, where he has experienced significant performative pressures. However, he clearly sees this as a more viable proposition, at least in his current setting, in a younger age class. As we have seen for other participants, Stuart uses performative data to justify the impact and effectiveness of his creative approaches. It is arguable that the creativity and positive data connection actually form a strong part of his sense of creative agency; he believes that creativity is the best way to deliver results, as they are currently measured. It is fair to say however, that for Stuart (as, for example, Simon in chapter 4), he sees any creativity/performativity 'struggle' as harder, the further up the primary school age range one teaches.

### **6.1.3 Summary of findings: Stuart**

Combining the analysis of the data from Stuart's interviews, there is evidence to suggest that Stuart has shown a sense of creative agency which has influenced his creative practice, but this has shown variations in its strength. His sense of agency

has fluctuated over time, being at a low point at the time of email interview. He has shown an enduring passion for and a clarity in his thinking about creativity. He has a desire to see creative practice flourish in a performative school climate. He has also been prepared to work in ways that significantly challenge established norms, taking real risks in developing his creative practice. He has at times has felt less able to do that.

Stuart does not see creativity and performativity as incompatible or a binary choice. He appears acutely aware of the performative climate of his settings and more recently has experienced significant constraints, from this, on his creative practice. He sees creativity as a promoter of effective outcomes. He sees those outcomes in ways that are performatively measured and others that are not. He values both.

He has been prepared to work in ways that are different to the established norms in developing his creative practice. On final placement, Stuart made some clear choices about creative approaches, supported by the school leadership and sometimes different to teachers in parallel classes. He was helped in this by the supportive views of the school leadership. Then and since, his agency has diminished where it has been affected by school leaders and string, prescriptive performative climates.

Overall, he remains optimistic. Despite his current pressures, there is evidence to suggest that he has retained a core belief and passion for creative and teaching and learning. He is experiencing clear tension between performativity and creativity but does not believe that has to be so. His experience, throughout final placement and the last four years, has been that creativity has a greater place in the younger years of primary school. He was looking forwards to a move back to year 3, where he sees

the opportunities to teach in a way that makes sense for him and to be able to experience Ruti's (2009) view of agency.

As a link between the focus on Stuart and the later section focussing on ITE leaders (me include), attention now turns to a short reflection on creativity in ITE. This will focus briefly on one example of academic assessment where Stuart was the student and I was the tutor in charge. The reflection provides some evidence of both Stuart's creative agency and risk taking as a student and mine as an ITE tutor, adding to the agentic focus of this chapter.

## **6.2. A brief cases study of creativity in ITE**

The context lies in the *Creativity in Primary Education* module that has formed the context for all of the student participants across chapters 4, 5 and 6. The data is drawn from the materials put together, in 2014/15, for a formal presentation at York St John University '2015 'Talk about Teaching' conference, where I presented about my approaches to the module assessment (see appendices 1 and : proposal for the presentation; presentation summary photos of the student assessment used for the event respectively). Since the module started, in 2009, I have been module leader. The module assessment was a group presentation and an individual essay. Student feedback began to highlight that the presentation, ironically, that these assessment forms did not allow for much creative expression. Without specific direction, every group, over several years had defaulted to a PowerPoint presentation. Neither the students, nor I, had considered anything else. The conference proposal articulates my intention behind promoting alternative forms of assessment, as I wished to show 'how rigorous level 6 academic assessment can take place alongside real freedom for students to approach assessed presentations in ways of their choosing' (appendix 2). As can be seen from the conference presentation summary (appendix

3), I began to encourage the students to approach this more creatively. In 2012, this had no effect. 2013 saw the first use of drama as a presentation tool. 2014 saw every group bar one, used some form of non-PowerPoint approaches, mostly dramatic scenarios. The use of drama was not suggested; this was student choice. Stuart, in 2013 was the first to propose the use of drama as a presentation tool for assessment. Appendix 3 gives a brief overview and some photos of that presentation. It also describes briefly some other scenarios that were used the following year, building on Stuart's success.

Why is relevant to this thesis. Two direct quotes from Stuart from his 2018 email interview indicate his resolve, despite the pressures of performativity, to pursue his passion for creative teaching and learning:

I MUST ensure that I implement a creative approach to teaching and learning.

Next year (in Year 3) I am going to be a pioneer in this at my school and ensure planning is centred around creativity.

My argument is, that Stuart's passion in this area has some history. He wants to be a 'pioneer' for creativity in his current school. He was a pioneer, of creative approaches to assessment, in this university module. Through the first half of this chapter, evidence has been discussed, to suggest his willingness to take risks and try new approaches in school. He clearly did this through this assessment. My advice to him and his group of peers at the time, was, that any alternative, creative approach had to be at least as, or more, effective than the traditional approach of a PowerPoint type presentation. They were being assessed on the *content* of the presentation, not the *form* of presentation. I was bound by the performative measures of the assessment criteria and module learning outcomes. For me and the students, there was no escaping that. Stuart was proposing a risky approach,

because it was untested. For him and his peers, the main risk was that trying something new, achieved a disappointing grade (they were a very ambitious group, very focussed on achieving strong academic outcomes). For me, as module leader, there was risk too. If I actively encouraged creative approaches to assessment and the students did not do well, they could have grounds for challenge or even formal appeal. Further, as I was also course leader, I was potentially opening myself up to criticism from colleagues, about the academic rigour of allowing such forms of assessment for a final year, 20 credit BA (Hons) module. However, there seemed to me, little point in promoting creativity to my students, if I was not prepared to be true to myself, because of the chance of difficulties. I could see the potential, as could Stuart, of trying something new.

As can be seen for the conference presentation summary (appendix 3) in Stuart's year (2013, shortly before his final placement) only his and one other group tried an alternative approach. In 2014, all groups bar one tried alternatives to a formal PowerPoint presentation. But what of the outcomes? Appendix 3 show the measured, performative outcomes of three of these alternative forms across 2013-14: marks of 88%, 85% and 78%. These marks were not for the quality of the drama - that was stilted to say the least. They were for the way that the alternative, creative approach enhanced the critical engagement of the students, in arguing, contrasting and comparing various theoretical perspectives to explore a key issue. It is impossible to say whether these marks would have been higher, or lower, if they had done a more usual PowerPoint presentation. What I *can* say, is, that by taking an alternative approach, they achieved excellent and outstanding grades, all of which were moderated using the normal university requirements. What I can also say is, that these high grades were awarded, because the alternative, creative forms of

assessment facilitated deep engagement with the subject matter for those students. In short, in this case, creativity enhanced the students' learning and outcomes.

There are a number of significant points here. Firstly, Stuart was a genuine pioneer as a student in this context. He lived out his values, passions and enthusiasm. His drive to practice creatively, took peers along with him and influenced subsequent students. The high level of creative agency that was identified through his interviews, was evident here at an earlier point. This lends weight to his assertion, that he wants to be that creative pioneer in his current school. Secondly, there were clear risks for both Stuart (and his peers) and me. As has been seen in all of the participants so far, the risks revolved around performative agendas of pupil (or on this case, student) attainment and progress. Another aspect is, that the freedom for the students to do this, came from three sources. Firstly, from the module leadership. Starting with me and then bringing other module tutors on board, we were able to create the environment for student to confidently approach assessment in radically different way. Secondly, this freedom came from within; from the students' and my own creative agency. Ultimately as individual and groups we all had to 'take the plunge'. Thirdly, the freedom over a longer period of time, came from the success of the pioneers. For me, it was good in 2014, to highlight the success of the creative approaches from 2013; previous creativity bred further creativity and previous success bred further success. When I presented at the conference, I unequivocally used the performative outcomes as part of the justification. The irony here, compared to school, is that often in higher education, very high marks can be seen with suspicion and regarded as grade inflation (e.g. Office for Students 2018). That was a significant part of the risk for me. Mirroring aspects of the participants so far, the creative freedom of the students was closely related to the agency afforded to



them by leaders. Without that, it would have required a far greater level of confidence, agency and toleration of risk for the students.

This final point leads to the final set of participants, which explores the creative agency of leaders in ITE, especially in the performative context of Ofsted.

### **6.3 Creative agency in ITE leadership**

This section centres around an interview/discussion between two leaders in ITE. First, there is Carla, whose leadership role includes a specific focus on Ofsted and their inspection of ITE. Secondly is me, the Director of Undergraduate ITE in the same university department; we are colleagues.

Prior to 2014, we worked as co-Heads of Programme for the Primary Education (QTS) course. In 2014 Carla took on a role that was more data and student outcome orientated. In late 2014, there was a significant change in ITE leadership. Carla and I, along with two other colleagues, then took over the overall leadership of ITE as an interim measure. In 2016, following a university restructuring, Carla took on a more senior role, including responsibilities related to Ofsted inspections across all ITE routes. I took on the undergraduate ITE director role. Therefore, by the time of this interview, we had worked together in different roles of ITE leadership for around six years.

As context, our ITE provision was inspected in 2011 (outcome grade: 'satisfactory') and in 2012 (outcome grade: 'good'). Primary ITE had a further single issues inspection (management of pupil behaviour) in 2015. The outcome grade was again 'good'. We then had a full inspection in 2017 (outcome grade: 'good').

The intention of the interview was to capture views and experiences from both of us, as we discussed responses to interview questions. It was conducted in November

2017. This was a significant time for our ITE leadership, just after the end of our 2017 two-part Ofsted inspection of ITE. The report graded our ITE provision as follows (Ofsted 2017): the outcomes for trainees, good: the quality of training, good: the quality of leadership and management, outstanding: overall effectiveness, good.

### **6.3.1 Interview findings**

As for previous participants, the interview/discussion was analysed by the same process described earlier. Analysis of our interview suggested three significant themes. The first was our reflections on the various influences that affect ITE practice. The second was ownership and agency and third was balancing freedom and performativity.

Each theme will now be discussed.

#### **6.3.1.1 Theme 1: Influences on ITE practice**

Considering the timing of the interview, it was perhaps inevitable that Ofsted would be the starting point of the discussions. At the start of the interview, Carla was clear in her view about the changing influence of Ofsted over time:

I think it's been like a mill stone around our neck for seven years .. we have always been talking about it, thinking about it. I would say the first three of those it was quite a negative experience of being, it did feel like being policed and being having to be ready to be inspected, to be accountable always justifying your position.  
(Transcript section 6)

The early period referred to - the 'policed' period – was one on which I reflected  
(transcript section 19 -21)

When you were talking about that policing bit ... we were working a lot with external advisors ... I think there was a period of time where we were, seemed to be being pulled around a bit by not necessarily Ofsted themselves but interpretations of Ofsted by people who were external to us.

What was emerging, was an agreed reflection that in the 2010-2014 period, Ofsted was being seen by ITE senior leaders, as a very negative, determining influence. We were working regularly with external advisors. As Perryman et al (2018) reflect, a whole industry has grown up around institutional preparation for Ofsted. Inspection was being used as a means to determine some of our ITE practices. As Carla reflected (transcript section 24):

I think Ofsted was used as a threat quite readily. You have got to do this because Ofsted won't like it.

What was happening, was more about the perceptions of Ofsted rather than the realities. The 'threat' of Ofsted, as perceived by ITE leadership, was resulting in a search for a solution as to how to deal with Ofsted and the perceived threat. As Carla reflected:

You get scared and so you are more likely to want to find someone who can give you the answers that's going to get you through this experience that's been built up as this hideous experience. And again, it's that feeling of it, they are going to come and do it to you, they are going to come and get you ... And so, you had better shape up and you know you better sort it out and do what they say.  
(Transcript sections 26 and 28)

So, for our ITE department in that time before 2014, the dominant influence on our practice was Ofsted to an extent, but also, and arguably more so, the external advice we were receiving about responding to and preparing for Ofsted. This perception, rather than the reality of Ofsted, was picked up later. I reflected on this:

Something that concerns me is and I think it applies to ITE, I think it applies to school as well is not so much about the realities of what Ofsted look at but it's about perceptions of universities and schools about what Ofsted want to see. You know there's still that, you are going back here three four years, people were talking about oh well we need to do this for Ofsted, we need to work in this way for Ofsted.  
(Transcript section 59)

Carla picked this up reflecting on the two parts of our 2017 inspection (part 1 in May during student teachers' final school placements and part 2 in November when the students were qualified and working as NQTs). For part one, she reflected, we prepared lots of evidence, nicely presented, based on what we thought they would like to see, For part two, we were more focussed on addressing our perceived weaker areas, in terms of where we were at that point and how we would continue to develop, up to and after inspection part two. As Carla said (transcript section 68)

Phase two, I think it was much more honest kind of discussions, so, we were able to say we know we have got to work on this, this is a longer thing. And actually, I think we got a lot of respect for admitting that some of the things we needed to work on were bigger than the timeframe we had.

What was starting to emerge, was the reflection, that having a skewed perception of Ofsted as purely a threat, had not been positive for us. Allowing that perception of Ofsted to drive much of our work had been counterproductive. Carla in transcript section 100 commented that:

we were being told [pre 2014] that 'it's not good enough' and we were being told 'they are coming to get you'. You are just living in fear of whatever it is, and so you are doing this retrospective gathering of evidence to try and get you out of this hole that you are in.

Ofsted, or more accurately, the perception of Ofsted, was, to an extent, giving an orientation to how we were seeing ourselves (Holloway 2018). Having a more balanced view of the realities of Ofsted, post 2014, was enabling us to be more honest about what we do and more agentic in our practice.

Following on from this, I discussed some key areas of my PhD work in this Ofsted context. Being fellow PhD students, Carla and I regularly discussed our areas of work, so this was quite natural. I asked (transcript section 101) whether Ball's (2003) notion of the teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity had, in her view, any

validity in the context of ITE. Carla reflected that she did not see these two ideas as ends of a spectrum, but as co-existing. However, when asked whether this view had changed, reflecting back four years (to what she describes as the 'policed period') she said

'Oh yeah, then it was all terror ... Because you just think you know they are going to come and sack you.' (transcript sections 106 and 108).

Reflecting further on 'terror', Carla highlighted an irony. For her, the terror in the 2017 inspection was to be graded as 'requires improvement'. We had seen other ITE providers in that situation, who had been given no further student allocations to their ITE courses. The irony was, although she saw more terror in Ofsted in 2012, when we were seeing them very much as a threat, the reality was,

back in 2012 the stakes were not as high getting a grade 3 [requires improvement grading] as they are now. (Transcript section 133)

This underlies the very negative and, to an extent, illogical influence of the perception rather than the reality of Ofsted; the perception was always more negative and less helpful than the reality. Foucault's two meaning of the word 'subject' would apply here (Ball and Olmedo 2013). The first is the state of subjection to control by someone else; in this case Ofsted. The second refers to the configuration of our identity. This 'becoming', discussed in chapter 2, is result of processes of identity construction which are influenced and maybe constrained by their contexts and circumstances (Ball and Olmedo 2013). Subjectivity therefore is seen as 'the processes of becoming which focus on *what we do* rather than *who we are*. (p.87; original italics). In our case, as subjects we were both self-governed and we were also governed by Ofsted.

Reflecting on the 'soul' element, Carla said

Your soul is if you have your integrity and you know why you are doing it because you shouldn't be doing it for Ofsted. (Transcript section 108).

In turn I reflected:

To me the soul is doing what you see as the best ... for pupils, for students not responding to any external forces (Transcript sections 111 and 113)

Over transcript sections 114 – 116, we both reflected on how our more recent approaches to ITE leadership, had shown a tendency to respond less to external forces but to work within them. We reflected on how we had not played some of, what may be perceived as, the 'data games' e.g. passing students with QTS who did not warrant it or keeping students on the QTS route who did not have a heart for it (students not completing or not gaining QTS were at that time, negative data indicators for Ofsted). As Carla said;

if that's the game you start playing, if you really start gaming it then you have lost your soul' (Transcript section 114)

Reflecting on the more recent period, I commented that the last three years had seen us become more data orientated (transcript section 29). This had been initially very Ofsted orientated but had become, under Carla's leadership, more student orientated. This will be discussed further under theme 2. Carla reflected on the positive and negative aspects of a more data-centred approach to ITE. Whilst acknowledging that it could be seen negatively, she highlighted the positive aspects. The data we were collecting, we were now using developmentally, to ask questions and see where improvements could be made on our terms, rather than just as a response to perceptions of what Ofsted wanted to see. As Carla said in transcript section 34:

It's this question of having it done to you or grabbing hold of it and doing it yourself ...you can allow them to let, to let them do it to you and you are just passive in the process and then you really are bound by the performative culture.

As McGushin (2011) argues, the self is both an agent (active) and an object (passive). As Ruti (2009) argues, we are neither fully agentic nor totally without empowerment. We were, as ITE leaders, taking a more active, agentic role, much more on our terms and for the good of the students. This also, contributed to our 2017 grading of good overall, with outstanding leadership and management.

So, a recurring theme emerges as to how the leadership of ITE, over the previous three years, had moved from one based on external perceptions of what Ofsted wanted, to a more confident approach. This was more firmly rooted in performative data, but the data was supporting that confidence on two counts. Firstly, it was indicating positive outcomes for our students (Ofsted 2017; p. 2). Secondly it was being used to promote positive student outcomes by helping us as ITE leaders to target improvements (Ofsted 2017; p.2). The data was being used with integrity and authenticity, allowing us to be proactive e.g. in preparing for Ofsted, rather than seeing Ofsted as something that was being inflicted upon us and an item of 'terror'.

There is evidence here to suggest that the leadership of ITE was becoming more agentic, working within, rather than against or in opposition to the performative agenda of Ofsted. There was a sense that a more peaceful co-existence was emerging. This reflects agency as defined by Ruti (2009) that allows us to work within the realities of constraints but in a way that makes sense to us.

This leads into discussion of the second theme; ownership and agency.

### 6.3.1.2 Theme 2: ownership and agency

As we have seen in the previous section, Carla used the term 'policing' with regards to Ofsted, especially going back three years or so in our experience of ITE. The use of this phrase actually appears to indicate a growing agency in Carla. Talking about this recent past she says:

It [Ofsted] is still policing, and we have known it's coming, but I think we changed the way we approached it the last couple of years.  
(Transcript section 10).

She characterises this change, in terms of 'ownership' of the data. Her motivation and drive is still 'getting the best' for the students' (transcript section 14) but the difference more recently was:

we had spent years gathering data for the purposes of Ofsted, but we didn't own that data, it was just for Ofsted. I was really keen that we took hold of it, really got to know what we were like and used it to improve the student experience. Which as it happens, I knew Ofsted would like ... we didn't do it for Ofsted, we did it for the students.  
(Transcript section 16 and 18)

Carla goes on to be clear, that the change in focus in ITE leadership was about honesty and integrity with our data, using it to improve student outcomes.

It's certainly about ownership and about taking control, it's about whatever it is, whatever this thing is engaging with it, embracing it and not being afraid to be reflecting around that, being critical around it ... (Transcript section 40)

In our discussion, I was very much in agreement, both in terms of the use of data in the past and in the present, with phrases like data 'just to get out of a hole' and 'just to kind of prove a point' (transcript sections 41 – 47). There is a point here, which reflects all of the student participants and their school experiences. Carla and I were both talking about agency and ownership, rather than Ofsted, per se, as a driver.



However, the performative climate in which we both work, leads us to frame, at least some of that agency, in the data itself. As Carla puts it:

It's data to inform you in your evaluation and inform development ... so, when I took on the Ofsted role at that point personally I felt like we knew where we were, so it gives you a bit more confidence, it gives you balls to argue your point. Because you know, you know yourself. (Transcript section 48)

There appears to be a dual stand of performativity and agency. We had taken a more agentic ownership of performative data in our roles. However, some of that agency lies in the confidence we draw from what the data suggests, because it was generally positive. In turn, we were commended by Ofsted for our approach to the use of performative data (Ofsted 2017). So, there is what appears to be almost a symbiotic relationship here. We have moved to a more agentic approach to performative data. That approach is focussed on student outcomes. The data, when positive, builds our agency. Both the positive data and the agentic approach were shown in our 2017 Ofsted inspection, to be regarded as positive indicators to Ofsted. This sense of agency was borne out in practice, by us presenting to Ofsted, for part two of the inspection, the areas to improve that we were going to address over the following year. This was in contrast to previous views, where we felt we had to have everything sorted out in time for Ofsted. As I commented:

I mean, my feeling is that part of that confidence is built on the picture that we have of our ourselves which is obviously supported by the data that we have ... to me that's supported that level of confidence and I think that's a strong part of why we felt able to actually say to Ofsted this time you know we are not going to rush that, we are going to do it because we recognise it needs doing but we are going to take a ... a year effectively to do this because it's really important. (Transcript sections 95 and 97)

We are certainly not avoiding or subverting the performative agenda. The ownership was actually promoted, again ironically, by a stronger view of the performative agenda as leadership structures changed. As Carla commented:

we had to take on the role of Head of Department in various degrees. And that made us embrace the accountability view of our provision ... I think we have cut out a lot of rubbish and now we do gather data that's meaningful and I think we stopped listening [laughing] to other people [external advisers]. (Transcript section 82)

What emerges from the discussion, is the reflection that, as we have taken on more ownership for performative measures, we have worked with Ofsted, rather than defending against them. We were in agreement, that this actually makes working with Ofsted a more positive process. Although inspection is not a perfect process, there are opportunities to jointly improve provision. Carla said;

Ofsted would argue that they are about improvement and helping you to improve ... By hiding stuff, by being defensive and not being honest you are not going to get any improvement at all, all you are doing is getting through the process and trying to get the grade you want. But actually, I think we were really honest, we weren't defensive, we were really clear, our evaluation was really sound. (Transcript section 80)

This discussion of our realities as ITE leaders is arguably a good exemplification of some of the Lacanian concepts discussed in chapter 2 two. Across transcript sections 227 – 240 we returned to earlier (non-recorded) discussions about these Lacanian concepts. We reflected on Ruti's argument that happiness lies to an extent, in recognising ourselves as 'beings of lack and uncertainty (2009; p.52). The discussions here, suggests that three years or so previously, we did not confront the 'lack' that we felt because of the 'threat' of Ofsted. We prepared defensively. In 2017, our approach to data (the signifier) was more proactive. Therefore, when inspected the agency did not lie wholly with the Other (Ofsted) as we took for ourselves some of the agency of the signifier because we were empowered by the confrontation of

lack rather than the defensive response to it. This is a key point for the whole thesis. When agency is empowered by the confrontation of concerns (lack) rather than actions being driven by external perceptions of how to address those concerns, there is the potential for action that is authentic and effective. In this context, I am well aware that 'effective' is being seen in terms of Ofsted judgements and can be viewed as a cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu 1990). However, the context here is one in where we are leaders of ITE. We may wish to change the current climate or not, but we do have to work within it, as our students have signed up for a course which leads to the award of QTS. Within ITE, being graded as less than 'good' has serious negative implications for the future existence of the course. The rights and wrongs of these performative foci is not the issue at this point. What is important, is the agency that we as leaders have developed *within* the performative culture of ITE. This would appear to be an exemplification of the 'art of living' (Ruti 2009) and a peaceful co-existence of creativity and performativity. As Carla commented:

No, but in terms of the agency giving you the power and not the Other or ..., that's absolutely what I think. And when you do that that's when performativity and creativity coexist. (Transcript section 242)

This leads us into the final theme, balancing freedom and performativity. Here, our discussion was not explicitly about creativity, but about some of the freedoms to practice within ITE within the performative climate. Whilst creativity and freedom are not synonymous, they are linked.

### **6.3.1.3 Theme 3: balancing freedom and performativity**

As discussed in the previous section, Carla clearly recognised the notion of 'terror' from the recent past in our ITE department. However, she did not see terror and soul now (2017) as two ends of a spectrum, but as co-existing

Well, I mean in education it definitely exists, but I don't feel it myself, I don't see the terror and the soul or however he phrased it as two ends of the spectrum ... I see them coexisting. (transcript section 102 and 104)

The growing ownership of performative measures discussed in the previous section, leads onto considering the balances between freedom and performativity. Carla and I were clear and in agreement, that we do not have complete freedom in ITE. As I commented:

we don't have, in reality I don't think we have absolute freedom to look at what we regard as best practice. Because I guess in a sense our students are coming to us with an expectation that they will achieve certain things which are standards related. (Transcript section 121)

We are constantly referencing the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) because our students have to show they have achieved these in order to be awarded QTS. The Teacher Standards articulate and quantify aspects of teacher performance. Therefore, teacher identity becomes relational to the standards themselves (Holloway 2108). Alongside the standards, is the ITE Core Content Framework (DfE 2016) that sets out central government expectations for the ITE curriculum. The combination of these two prescriptions is described by Mutton, Burn and Menter (2017) as an example of the reduction of education policy to 'mandating national standards, rather than paying attention to the process of professional learning' (p.15). What does emerge from the discussion, alongside the growing agency and ownership related to performative data, is an accompanying change in our approach to the Teacher Standards. Carla said:

Four years ago, we went in and we did the standards to them [the students]. But now we are saying where you are so what do you need to do then, what are you going to do about it? Unless you engage with whatever it is, there's no point in pretending these things don't exist or will stop existing. (Transcript section 120)

This suggests a more authentic, less ‘symbolically violent’ (Bourdieu 1990), “doing the standards to the students” approach:

You can approach the standards and the national curriculum letter by letter, word by word or you can think a bit more creatively about it. (Carla: transcript section 122)

There is an acceptance here that we are balancing freedom and performative constraints. A key point is, that for both of us, the discussion here suggests that this not a negative thing. It is an acceptance of our performative context, but a recognition of the agency that we have ‘reclaimed’ and would continue to do so.

Discussing performativity and creativity explicitly, as ITE leaders, Carla expressed her views:

To me creativity is about thinking differently and solving problems. So, performativity is not necessarily in opposition to it. Some of my best creative thinking is in a broad performativity-related context because it’s a problem. ... I would say I’m a creative thinker. I like fixing, I like problem solving, I like thinking of different ways of doing it. (Transcript section 150)

As our ITE Ofsted lead, Carla reflected further on specific examples of her creativity, inspired, some may say ironically, by our inspection. She spoke (transcript section 150 and 152) of the myriad ideas to deal with Ofsted, that she had even during the inspection weeks reflecting that

Some people might say that’s not creative, but I think it is because you are thinking right, this is today. What is our objective, how can we go about that, who can be involved in it, what? It is quite motivating.

As for the student participants, what is important here is not whether anyone else agrees with the individual’s conceptualisation of creativity. The key is the sense of creative agency and the outcomes that it provides. One such example was a simple proforma that Carla created. It was to accompany the evidence packs that we were

putting together, to address Ofsted's lines of enquiry, between parts one and two of our inspection (appendix 4). This is a significant piece of evidence. It showed a 'massive change of thinking from that let's just swamp [Ofsted] with evidence' (me: transcript section 161). This proforma allowed us to take their agenda but be far more agentic, honest and authentic in our response to Ofsted's performative agenda. As I said:

But I think what it enabled us to do was to take their agenda, and we can't pretend that a line of enquiry is our agenda because it's their agenda, they stated it. And say well actually this is what we are good at, here is the evidence, this is what we are still working on, this is what we are going to do. And I think they made a very, very confident statement from us of not only of both the strengths but also it underpinned that confidence to say, and the bits that aren't good enough here is what we are doing. (Transcript section 165)

We discussed how Carla's creative endeavour was triggered by a request for simplicity of evidence from the inspectors.

Well that process of coming up with those forms, you can see the spark of that came from something that one of the inspectors had said in phase one when I was trying to explain something to him and overwhelming him with information. Which is the equivalent of shoving a load of evidence in front of him. (Transcript section 166)

She wanted to balance that with giving the fullest picture of our provision. This allowed us to state our position with confidence. As Carla stated, 'again that's about you are taking charge of it ... it gives you opportunity to say, to have a voice in the process' (transcript section 168).

This led us to consider the (possibly ironic) promotion of creativity by the process of inspection. Reflecting on previous inspection (2011, 2012) I commented on the lack of any 'sense of self that allowed us to be creative in the ways that we approached an inspection' (transcript section 177). We agreed that previous experience had

been dominated by external advice about what Ofsted wanted to see, what other ITE providers had done and what we had to have in place. As I commented:

I think in the broadest sense of creativity I think we have moved on a lot and actually allowed that sort of performative pressure if you like to foster creativity in a sort of slightly ironic sort of way I think.  
(Transcript section 179)

We also discussed how the individual inspectors on our 2017 inspection team, valued the creativity that they saw in our students when teaching. I recounted an inspectors' feedback meeting during part one of the inspection:

When they were talking about that lesson where the student trainee had used QR codes, ... to look at something dry and dusty like proteins and carbohydrates. And Inspector A using that phrase that sticks in my mind about a lesson being 'breathlessly good'. And that really sort of cemented for me this notion that actually these people, love them or hate them, aren't actually looking for one set thing or one set approach.

For me that was something of a critical moment. The notion that Ofsted look for a particular form of planning, teaching and evidence of outcomes is so entrenched, that Ofsted itself, explicitly sought to 'dispel myths' about the requirements (Ofsted 2018; section 31). It was both refreshing and something of a revelation, to hear inspectors enthusing about the creative approaches of our students. That was mirrored in the creative freedom the we felt in approaching part of the inspection and responding to their lines of enquiry (as discussed earlier).

We discussed the idea that creativity and performative can be seen as a binary choice:

PR: I see them not only as capable of coexistence but actually think they certainly potentially enhance each other.

Carla: Yeah.

PR: I certainly don't think they inhibit each other, or they don't have to.

Carla: They don't have to, I think it depends, I mean maybe if we were grade 3, we would feel completely different around this, but it's your relationship with the performativity thing whatever it is.  
(Transcript sections 185 – 190)

Building on that, I asked Carla what then would prevent the performative from dominating the creative, in our strongly performative context. Her response is significant:

Well, it's about having an honest and transparent dialogue with yourself as well as with your stakeholders and involving everyone in that. So, if there is something that you know that you are weaker on you don't hide it, you don't pretend otherwise. You actually say we need to work on this, so you kind of highlight the problem rather than hiding from it. I think it's about just, it's kind of having this "well why not" attitude which is really hard because there are constraints.  
(Transcript section 192)

Those constraints and tensions lie in things like Ofsted grading, as discussed already, but also in the wider work of ITE. We discussed alternative forms of assessment (e.g. as discussed in section 6.2) and how creativity as leaders can be about opening up possibilities to students. We discussed the risks of performative pressures for students and tutors, and also what was needed to allow that sort of creative freedom. Carla said 'You need buy in, don't you?' (transcript section 206).

My response was:

Again, it's that sort of professional confidence and sense of ownership. And I hate the expression "giving people permission" but I can't think of another one, giving students permission to do things in different ways. (Transcript section 207)

Carla had reflected on this professional confidence, growing through experiences, leading to a point where one feels less need to seek permission to do things differently.



I think as you get more experienced, I certainly don't feel the need to seek permission to do something in a different way. (Transcript section 214)

Referring to our inspection report (Ofsted 2017), I asked whether she thought the strong report would give us more confidence in and ownership of what we do in ITE. Carla reflected that it 'legitimises the way we work, and I think it will give us a greater voice' (transcript section 226). In this, she meant a voice within the wider university and the opportunity to justify more strongly the plans that we may have. Again, there is a sense here, of a symbiotic relationship between freedom and performativity, in this case between freedom and Ofsted inspections. The sense of confidence that allowed us to approach Ofsted more on our terms helped us to achieve a stronger outcome. That outcome in turn can boost our confidence to further explore approaches of our choosing and pursue improvements more on our agenda. For us as two ITE leaders, performativity and creativity were not binary choices but were coexisting and co-enhancing.

Rounding the discussion off we discussed further, the idea of ownership and freedom within performative constraints. I was clear in my thoughts:

For sure the two of us have developed a different perspective on Ofsted .... But there's still pressures, some of them real, some of them perceived ... my perception, my belief is that we are taking much more control of the perceived pressures.... minimised the perceived ones and therefore better placed to deal with the real ones. (Transcript section 251 and 253)

Asked then about how to be as free as possible within the constraints, Carla had a response, that she said, 'will sound depressing based on what we said, but part of it is acknowledging and playing the performativity game' (transcript section 258). In this she reflected, that as long as our standards were high as perceived by others (e.g. Ofsted) and by data measures, we would be given more freedom. For both, the

outcomes are important, not just in providing that objective base on which our build our freedom and ownership, but for the students themselves, first and foremost, to learn, to gain QTS and get a job doing what they love; teaching (transcript section 266). One view of this, is that the freedom is the 'reward' for conforming to the Foucauldian ideas of surveillance and its exercise of control. An alternative view is a more pragmatic, agentic one. We (Carla and me, our colleagues and students) operate in an environment where performative measures have a significant place. We are trying to live within the performative pressures, resisting their power to drive our particular forms of practice and rob our agency. We are trying to work authentically, in ways that have meaning for us. In doing so, we have found that we are meeting performative expectations and this in turn affords us greater freedom and agency. It is a relatively peaceful co-existence between freedom and performativity, in this case, in the context of Ofsted

We agreed that data and outcomes can be viewed negatively. Much of chapter two of this thesis, discusses literatures that are critical of performativity and outcomes that are data driven. That chapter was written because a critique of performativity is a key part of my argument. However, in transcript sections 267 – 274 we contextualised this. I said

I think outcomes can get skewed at two ends of the spectrum or they can get skewed in the sense that the outcomes are everything, it's just about getting the outcomes, whether it's SATs data, whether it's degrees whatever. The other extreme where I think it's skewed is that outcomes are [seen as] the spawn of Satan and we shouldn't quantify anything ... and we should just do what we want and be very creative ... I think either extreme is out of kilter. (Transcript section 267)

I argued that that there needs to be a balance, as seen on a notional performativity to freedom continuum. I acknowledged some of our realities;

I can't change the performative climate, I can't change the teacher standards, I can't change Ofsted grades, I can't change SATs results ... but I can exercise the freedoms that we have within that climate. (Transcript section 273)

This self-quote captures the essence of the final sections of this thesis, where I suggest some ways forward in exercising my freedoms in ITE.

However, we also reflected how we may live within these realities. I said:

And for me what a lot of what we are talking about is having that professional confidence to take hold of what we actually believe in and deal with that in the middle [of the spectrum]. So, rather than going to one end of the spectrum and bowing entirely under the pressure, going to the other end of the spectrum, which seems to [be] some weird avoiding the issues. It's kind of living within it. (Transcript section 273)

This, and Carla's reflection on that spectrum - 'It's engaging with it, embracing it' (transcript section 274) - would appear to sum up our reflection on and working out of Foucault's notion of the 'care of the self' (Vintges 2014; McGushin 2014) and the art of living (Ruti 2009) and as discussed in chapter 2.

The interview concluded with a short (yet complex) question: Ofsted: keep or get rid? Why? (Transcript section 291). We agreed (across transcript sections 292-299) that we would keep Ofsted, but on a more developmental basis, more focused on examining self-evaluation. We both had serious concerns about the high stakes of very public institutional grading. I concluded with a comment that I would not have anticipated when I started this thesis:

I have found that during this [2017] inspection my attitudes have changed, and I ... have found myself on three different occasions since our inspection talking to students, basically, not exactly singing the praises of Ofsted but certainly pointing out that Ofsted are not on a mission to impose forms of practice. In fact, [they] do actually celebrate interesting, innovative creative approaches. (Transcript section 297)

### **6.3.2 Summary of findings: ITE leaders**

Analysis of the data from this paired interview and the inspection report, provide evidence to suggest that whilst there have been significant external and internal drivers of practice within ITE, not least from Ofsted, the leaders have managed to exercise a significant and growing degree of agency. The impact of Ofsted has changed over time, from one seen as almost totally negative, to one that is much less so and can actually be seen as positive. In this regard, it is the perception of Ofsted, rather than the reality of their role, that can be influential. In turn, the response of senior leaders within ITE (as in school) to these drivers, is crucial, in the degree of creative freedom that is allowed for teachers and students.

Overall, the analysis of the interview/discussion between Carla and me as ITE leaders provides evidence to suggest that we have grown in our confidence, agency and freedom. Over the last three of four years we have as an ITE leadership team, taken far more ownership of performative data and the Ofsted inspection and accountability agenda. This has led to a far more agentic, authentic and honest approach to accountability. There is also evidence to suggest that we have a better balance between performativity and freedom.

What previously had been seen as something of a battle or competing agendas, now have more harmony, balance and a recognition that they can actually coexist or even enhance each other. We have also found positives in the process of accountability and inspection. These have included open and developmental dialogue with inspectors, the process promoting creativity in our responses and the deepening of our confidence and agency as leaders of ITE. Whilst this may be seen as us conforming to state mandated expectations, I would argue, that for teachers to hold

any positive view of Ofsted, is something that is arguably *non-conformist* within the profession.

Finally, there are tension and dilemmas within our role. If we as leaders allow the performative agenda or more accurately the *perception* of that agenda, to over dominate, as has happened on the past, we lose our agency and we work for accountability not for our students. Another tension is the notion of encouraging risk taking and creative freedom for students, whilst playing a leading part in the performative apparatus that judges their academic and placement success. That personal/professional tension will be discussed fully in the concluding chapter, to which we now turn.

## Chapter 7: Synthesis and conclusions

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### Introduction

The title of this thesis is '*Creativity and/or performativity? A critical case study of tensions experienced by pre-service and early career teachers.*' So far, the contexts of creativity and performativity have been discussed from various theoretical standpoints (chapter 2). The relationship between identity, agency and creativity have been discussed through the lenses of three theoretical perspectives on subjectivity: Bourdieu's notion of habitus; Foucault's notions of ethical self-formation; and Lacan's notions of defiant subjects (chapter 2). The research approaches have been outlined and justified (chapter 3). Three sets of participant student teachers and leaders in ITE have been presented and the findings have been discussed in some detail (chapters 4, 5 and 6). These have reflected varying levels of agency amongst the participants.

This final chapter will bring together the theoretical foundations and the project research findings across all of the participants. Key arguments will be drawn together, presented and discussed. Visual models will be used to aid clarity. The implications of the findings and arguments will be presented and discussed. This will lead to the presentation of a model for ITE, that provides an original perspective on how the tensions between creativity and performativity may be approached. The chapter (and the thesis) will conclude with some thoughts about possible directions for future research in this area, that have arisen as a result of this research project.

To begin, the key findings across the three sets of participants will be drawn together and discussed.

## 7.1 Synthesis of key findings

All of the participants have experienced the realities of teaching within the performative pressures of contemporary primary education and primary ITE in England. The aim of this thesis has never been, to simply argue against such performative pressures (although this has been touched upon and will be highlighted further in this chapter). The focus is on exploring how teachers and teacher educators may live and work within these pressures in an authentic manner. Looking across all the participants, several key findings have emerged.

Firstly, the participants have all experienced periods of strong creative agency. They have all experienced times when they have enjoyed teaching and flourished as teachers in periods of strong creative agency. They have been able to approach teaching and learning in ways of their choosing.

Secondly, most of the participants have experienced periods where their creative agency has been weaker. This has varied considerably across the sample of participants. For some, this has been linked to short periods in particular settings or year groups, for example Stuart and Mike in upper key Stage 2, where statutory testing pressures were stronger. For two (Simon and Sarah) it has had a significant impact on their career plans.

Thirdly, where participants have been able to approach teaching and learning in a manner, that for them has authenticity and meaning, they have been able to develop a strong creative agency. Generally, the participants recognise the importance for their practice, of a strong sense of creative agency. They can see how their values as creative teachers work out in practice, where this agency is strong.

Fourthly, ITE, in the form of the focus module *Creativity in Primary Education*, has been influential in supporting student teachers in the development of their creative agencies. Across the student participants, the explicit encouragement to develop 'active definitions' of creativity within the final year creativity module has been influential. For most, this engagement with thinking and personal conceptualisation of certainty has continued after their qualifications as teachers. Clearly, for some, the realities of their early careers has at least hampered the practical application of these active definitions in their classrooms (e.g. Simon, Mike and Sonia).

Fifthly, for all participants, the role of senior leaders has been significant in the practical living/working out of those agencies. Generally, the participants report strong agencies within themselves. The focus module, *Creativity in Primary Education*, has been significant in developing that agency. However, the practical expressions of that agency have been facilitated and hindered (even destroyed) by school leaders and the associated ethos of their school settings. This point will be discussed in some depth later in this chapter.

Sixth, for all participants there has been a need to deal with tensions and struggles between creativity and performativity. For some, this has been characterised as a battle or antagonistic opposition (chapter 4). For some it is more a case of a balancing act; a productive tension (chapter 5). For others it has been seen as a more peaceful co-existence, of two things which are not necessarily or always in opposition (chapter 6). This point will be discussed in some depth later in this chapter.

A seventh key finding, was that where participants have been able to approach teaching and learning in a manner, that for them, has authenticity and meaning, it does not appear to have diminished and has often enhanced, their performance, as



measured within schools and ITE. There is perhaps an irony, that whilst creativity and performativity are often characterised as being in opposition, for some participants this has not been the case. Creative, agentic teaching has been allowed, even encouraged within performative environments. Such teaching has been justified using performative measures. It is arguable that this is good and right. It is also arguable that this represents a (mis)appropriation of creativity by performative agendas which can be seen as a polar opposite (Bibby 2018; Mould 2018). This point will be discussed in some depth later in this chapter.

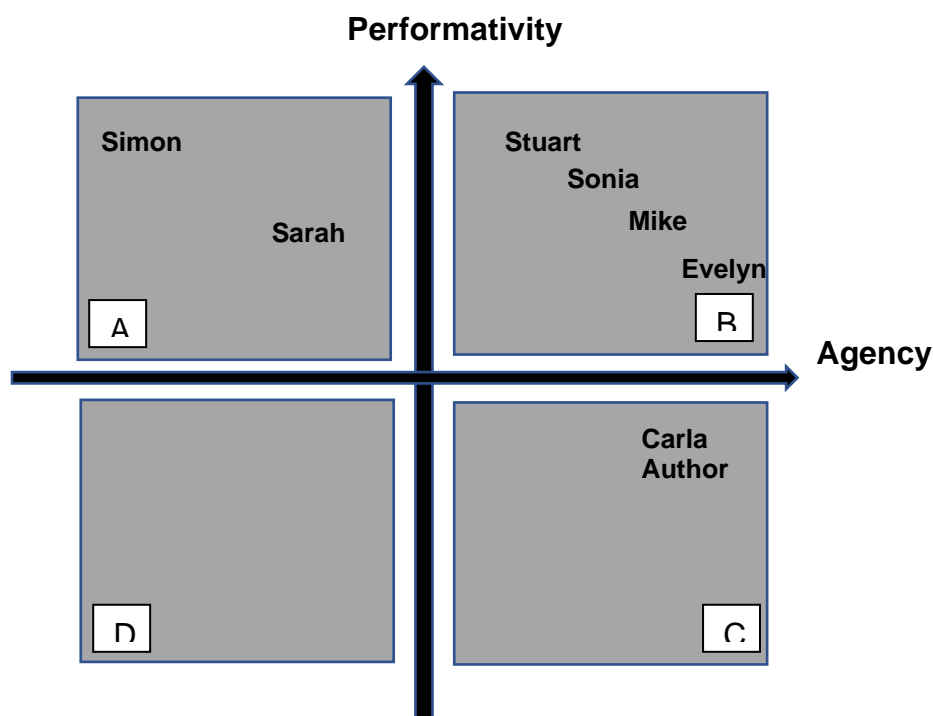
An eighth finding was that the participants recognise the importance of creative agency in allowing them to practice in the creative ways of their choosing. Agency and freedom are seen by the participants, as key factors in promoting creative approaches to teaching and learning and flourishing, with some authenticity, in a performative climate. This finding, along with the theoretical foundations in chapter 2, will form the basis of the final model for ITE, later in this chapter.

Finally, where struggles or battles are perceived between creativity and performativity, the participants feel strongly that creativity is worth fighting for. However, some participants feel that the struggles/battles are much more challenging, especially in some year groups and some curriculum subjects.

There is both pessimism and optimism in this concluding chapter. My pessimism is based on the seemingly endless and enduring logic of performativity and its (sometimes significantly) negative impacts on teachers. My optimism is based on the possibilities of approaching ITE in a way that promotes agency and self-formation as a creative process, allowing perhaps the highest forms of creativity in teachers. This point will be argued and discussed in some depth later in this chapter.

All of the participants have dealt with the tensions or perceived tensions between creativity and performativity. Their degree of agency within this has been explored and discussed in depth. As I hope has been clear, different participants have found themselves in different circumstances. By way of summary, figure 4 has plotted each participant on a pair of notional axes that intersect to create four quadrants. It is notional, in that, although the axes (x axis = agency; y axis = performativity) intersect at 0, the axes do not represent numbers. They do, however, represent increasing/decreasing levels of performativity and agency and therefore quadrants of positive and negative performativity and agency.

**Figure 4: A visualisation of participants' agency in their performative contexts**



The placing of each participant on the graph has been done on the basis of the findings and not by asking each participant where they would place themselves.

There is no suggestion here that anyone at the end of an axis is experiencing maximum or minimum performative pressure or agency.

Quadrant A is one of lower agency in the current role, alongside higher levels of performative pressure. This is likely to be characterised by anxiety and frustration. This has been exemplified by the participants Simon and Sarah in chapter 4. Sarah was considering a move to teaching in Australia, where she perceived there to be a lesser degree of performative pressure and greater freedom for teachers. Simon had left the profession, due largely to performative pressures and what he perceived to be a resultant lack of trust of teachers. These both demonstrate a lack of agency.

Quadrant B is one of greater agency within broadly the same performative pressures. The difference here, for Stuart, Sonia, Mike and Evelyn, was their own sense of agency and the greater degree of freedom that was being afforded them and. As can be seen, I am suggesting that the findings indicate quite wide variations within that quadrant e.g. Stuart and Evelyn. If Stuart's move to year 3 resulted in the freedoms and lesser performative focus that he anticipated, his position would perhaps then move to one similar to Evelyn.

Quadrant C is where I have placed Carla and me as ITE leaders. This is not to suggest that we are not subject to performative pressures, but I do believe, having been a Headteacher for ten years, that these pressures are not as relentless, on a day to day basis as for those in school. We do have to prove ourselves performatively in a range of ways, but we do have freedoms in how we do that. It should be noted that I have placed us as far up the performativity axis as I can, within that quadrant.

Quadrant D is one of lower performative pressure but lower agency; I have placed none of the participants in that area. I would suggest that a student or qualified teacher in that quadrant, would be one that was not taking the opportunities of the

potential freedoms afforded by a lack of performative pressures. Someone in this quadrant would probably be somewhat unmotivated and 'going through the motions'.

It could be argued (and this will be picked up later in this chapter) that for some, these pressures may be a catalyst for creative agency. In a graphical representation such as figure 4, quadrant B is often seen as the 'ideal' and quadrant D the most negative area on which to be placed. In this case, I would argue that the situation is more complex. I would argue that quadrant A is the most damaging to teachers where high performativity does not stimulate agentic resistance but does cause lower levels of teacher agency. This quadrant is, arguably, the place where performativity becomes 'terror' and the teacher's 'soul' is threatened. Quadrant D is unlikely to be one where performativity has negative impacts on teachers. However, I would argue that low levels of agency despite (or maybe because of) the lower levels of performativity, are unlikely to show a teacher whose 'soul' is in and being reflected in their work. Quadrants B and C are ones of greater agency. It is difficult and perhaps simplistic, to make assumptions about which is 'better'. Quadrant B is one of greater pressure on teachers and leaders. However, those teachers who make sense of that pressure and find agency within that are potentially well placed to flourish, if they can use that agency for the good of their pupils and not simply to satisfy the performative demands. Quadrant C is one of lower performative pressures. However, I would argue that this is a positive quadrant, only when those freedoms are used to teach agentially for the good of pupils/students, again not just to satisfy performative demands.

So, the positions of participants on these axes, whilst helpful in visualising their situations, can only at best, capture a situation at one moment. Had Simon served his first two years in a different setting, he may have been best represented in

quadrant B or C. Equally, Evelyn, in a different school could have been in quadrant A. Had our Ofsted inspection of ITE gone badly, I strongly suspect that Carla and I would be placed much further up the performative axis and lower on the agency axis.

The relationship between performativity and agency is not straightforward. Context and external pressures can influence agency as much as internal processes. The findings suggest that agency, or creative agency in this context, is a key factor in allowing students and teachers to navigate the tensions between performativity and creativity. It is appropriate therefore to bring together the findings and the theoretical foundations established in chapter 2, to look specifically at the influences on student and teachers' development of creative agency. Before the key arguments of the thesis are articulated, a brief recap of the main theoretical themes will be made as context.

## **7.2 A brief theoretical recap**

Chapter 2 discussed three key theoretical themes; normalisation, reproduction, appropriation with focus on Bourdieu's habitus; power, discipline, subjectivity and self-formation with a focus on Foucault; agentification and creativity with a focus on Lacan.

### **7.2.1 Bourdieu and habitus**

Bourdieu's concept of habitus was discussed at length in chapter 2. It is seen as a collection of practices and beliefs that can constitute "belonging". These lead to the development of dispositions within a social group, that can tend to normalise behaviour and thought, in line with the established practices and beliefs. The structure of practices and beliefs can structure future behaviours, as people are inculcated into the norms of the habitus. In this way the habitus serves to reproduce

itself and its practices and beliefs, often without conscious thought or challenge. I would argue that ITE has its own habitus. The rules of belonging are embodied in the requirements of any ITE course, to allow its student teachers the opportunity to meet the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). The requirements for Ofsted inspections of ITE take this further still, as does the (DfE 2016) ITE core content framework. The achievement of QTS is arguably a perfect example of the habitus, as a collection of practices and beliefs that can constitute “belonging”. The rules of belonging are embodied in the Teacher Standards. Anyone who can show that they meet the standards, can ‘belong’ to the QTS group. As that is a central focus of ITE courses, that habitus becomes a natural part of what we do, unchallenged and normal for those within it and whose interests it serves (Bourdieu, 1984).

It is the homogeneity of the resultant habitus that causes the practices to be understandable, expected and therefore taken for granted, uncritically accepted and continually reinforced (Bourdieu 1977). The habitus could therefore be characterised as “this is what we do” and the practices could be characterised as “this is what we do what we do because this what we have always done”. In the context of the influences of performativity, “we do what we do because this is what we do, and we do it because this is what we *have* to do” (Raymond 2018).

The habitus is not the totality of the self of those people within it (Alheit 2009). I would argue that this is borne out by the participants of chapters 5 and 6 where the habitus can be seen as potentially malleable (Rawolle and Lingard 2013).

### **7.2.2 Power, discipline, subjectivity and self-formation with a focus on Foucault**

The exercising of Foucauldian notions of power, control and discipline and control through performativity (Ball and Olmedo 2013) was discussed in chapter 2. Foucault

identifies three ways in which the 'means of correct training' (1979, p.172) are effected in society. The first is through hierarchical observations, where control is exercised as the criteria for a satisfactory outcome are internalised by those being observed. The tendency then, is to conform to those criteria. The second is the use of normalising judgements. This raises the notion of non-conforming, which is represented by behaviours that do not match the judgement criteria. These normalising judgments are used to rank and grade people according to their level of conformity to the normative expectations. This can then be used to reward or punish behaviours. The third element is the examination. This combines the observations and normalising judgements. Foucault describes the examination as 'a normalising gaze' (1979, p.184). Disciplinary power here is seen to be exercised through its *invisibility*, but simultaneously imposing, on those whom it seeks to control, a principle and expectation of compulsory *visibility*.

Foucault develops the notion of visibility in the idea of panopticism (Foucault, 1979; 1980) which was exemplified in chapter 2 with reference to Ofsted.

Foucault's later work also discussed freedom and self-formation. This arises from a choice to resist external power (McGushin 2014). This leads to Foucault's idea of the care of the self, as discussed in chapter 2. This is the 'becoming', when we engage in forging a relationship to ourselves (McGushin 2014), rather than passive acceptance of the disciplinary training outlined above (Foucault 1979). It is a practice of intellectual freedom, challenging forces that can shape our subjectivity (Clarke 2013b)

### **7.2.3 Agentification and creativity with a focus on Lacan.**

Where habitus and disciplinary training are the reality, there is little or no scope for anyone to develop an identity and agency, that they can in any meaningful way, call

their own. However, there is scope for some optimism. Building on this and developing from the Lacanian concept of 'lack', the formation of our agency can be seen as taking place in social contexts. The conscious confrontation of lack is important in our self-formation rather than the fantasies (e.g. becoming an outstanding teacher) which simply cover the lack. An 'outstanding' grade is fleeting and transient. It has no permanency, even when it remains as a judgement until the next point of judgement. However, Ruti (2009) argues that it is only when we confront lack and find ways of working and being that make sense to us, do we find 'the art of living. In this study, what ultimately seems to be crucial, is the relative strengths of what comes from within and what is imposed from without, as they combine to construct subjectivity and agency in the social contexts of ITE and primary schools.

Before the key arguments are discussed, a very brief discussion of the context of ITE, will serve as an introduction to these key arguments and claims to the original contribution of this thesis.

#### **7.2.4 The context of ITE**

I have argued so far, drawing together theoretical perspectives of chapter 2 and the research findings from chapters 4, 5 and 6, that in the struggle between performativity and creativity, the agency of teachers and leaders is crucial. It is crucial in ensuring that teaching and learning reflects the creativity of teachers and leaders and is not simply a compliant interpretation of practice, as that which achieves widely accepted and powerful performative indicators. In ITE we are working within at least three national sets of constraints. Firstly, the Teachers Standards (DfE 2012); secondly Ofsted inspection criteria for ITE; thirdly A Framework of Core Content for Initial Teacher Training (ITT; DfE 2016). If the



development of strong creative agency is important in student teachers, then, in such a constrained policy context for ITE, it is even more important than at any time in the past. These constraints are not deterministic, nor threatening to the development of such agency in student teachers. Whilst all three of the items above set out content or criteria for judgement, they do not set out *how* that is to be achieved. The criteria may set up tensions and concerns, judgements, grading and rankings, that could be seen as creating and constituting 'lack'. However, the way that these pressures are responded to, offers the potential freedom to develop agency. This was seen in every participant, at least to some degree.

What follows, is a discussion of the key arguments that arise from this research, about the struggles and tensions between performativity and creativity and the role of ITE in seeking to resolve or at least ameliorate them.

### **7.3 The key arguments of the thesis**

In articulating the key arguments of this thesis, three positions will be presented that represent the struggles between creativity and performativity amongst pre-service and qualified teachers. Mirroring chapter 2 and, to an extent, chapters 4-6, these will present progressively more agentic positions. These will be linked with literatures and the participants of the case study. The first of these positions is, the argument that creativity and performativity can be seen as being in a direct and antagonistic opposition to each other.

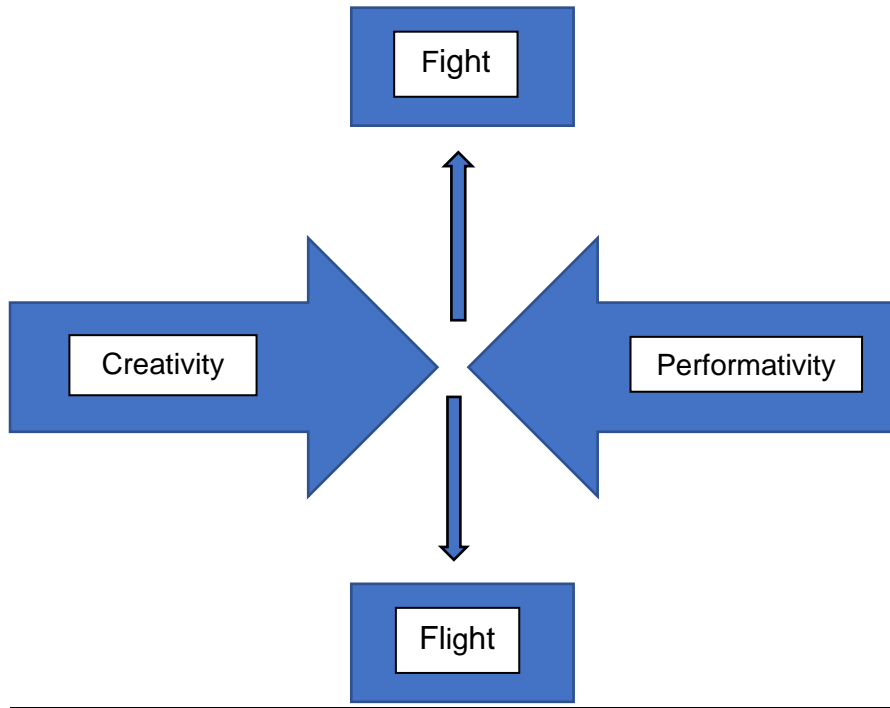
#### **7.3.1 Creativity and performativity: antagonistic opposition**

In the context of primary education and primary ITE, creativity and performativity can be seen as being in direct conflict with each other. Whilst not part of this thesis, I have experienced school-based mentors of my student teachers saying (both literally

and words to the effect of) 'we do not have time for creativity'. In her interview (transcript section 14) Sarah articulated this as her experience, talking about a creative form of pupil self-assessment that she developed:

I brought it back in SE3, and the teacher kind of disregarded it for being something that you do as a student but not necessarily as a teacher because you've not got time, but I've got that resource and I think that's a really good way to engage children in their learning.

In this situation, performativity and creativity are seen as something of a binary choice. None of the case study participants expressed the view that they believed that creativity was not important. They all believed that a strong creative agency was important as a teacher. However, in the current climate of performativity in primary education and ITE, in which performative measures are often seen as *the* focus, the struggle between creativity and performativity can be far from fair. As has been argued, where school or ITE leadership prioritise pupil data outcomes, there may barely even be a choice; performativity will win out. The student or early career teacher will struggle, unable to resist these pressures. The pressures will be handed down from the leadership to the student or teacher. Their agency and freedom to approach teaching and learning in their creative way will be (or at least potentially) stripped away. However, I would argue that where creativity and performativity are seen as being in direct conflict, there is still space for agency. The situation of conflict can be envisaged as a model (figure 5)

**Figure 5: Creativity and performativity in opposition**

Where there is conflict, the responses of the student/teacher I would argue, could be characterised as 'fight or flight'. Looking at flight, this response could be characterised by an almost literal flight from the profession, as seen in Simon, in chapter 4. It could also be characterised by the levels of anxiety and burnout in teachers (Adams 2018) caused, at least in part, by an audit culture where data is 'often used too much for monitoring and compliance, rather than to support pupil learning and school improvement' (Allen 2018; p.4). Whilst this has not been an explicit focus in the case study data, it is certainly clear in the wider teaching profession. It is also arguable that this 'flight' could be seen in terms of compliance. The flight is not an active leaving, but a more passive 'giving up' of agency and teacher's soul (Ball 2003; Ball, McGuire and Braun 2012). Humphreys (2017) argues that teachers can be drawn into the logic of a neoliberal, performative culture. Having been so, many maintain this 'habitus' through compliance. These flight representations are not strong and explicit elements of this response from the participants. However, for those who felt less agency, it is arguable that their more

literal flight response is in preference to a compliance, that would deny their very values as creative teachers; both Sarah and Simon articulated this in chapter 4.

As a teacher educator, it is hard to see any positives in this 'surrender' form of 'flight' response. I am not critical of teachers who feel no other option than to comply; the logic is, I would argue, difficult to resist in our contemporary culture and in many cases, decisions between compliance and leaving have many concrete and unavoidable factors at play, such as finance. I am, however, critical of teachers and leaders who comply with performative agendas in an uncritical manner, with little or no genuine thought given to what it is they are complying with and therefore creating/perpetuating 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1979). If this is widespread, education becomes reduced simply to reification and ranking and the equating of quality with quantifiable data; in such a world it could be hard to find a viable place for genuine creativity in teaching and learning.

The 'fight' response is quite different and has the potential to be both negative and positive. On the negative side, there are parallels to the flight response. For those who eventually take flight, the fight response may well come first: it had for Simon in chapter 4. The fight for creativity, in the face of constraining performative pressures, is likely to be a significantly negative and draining experience, where a teacher feels that their efforts make no difference. This reflects what Humphrey (2017; p. 42) describes as 'neoliberal dehumanisation...the loss of self-determination, the forfeit of choice, the restriction on voice and agency'.

On the more positive side, there is potential for agency within the fight response. Foucault's 'care of the self' (Foucault 1986; Batters 2011) explores practices that aim for self-improvement in relation to an ethical way of life. Foucault talks about being true to oneself and winning an ethos (Vintges 2014). If we ignore the development of

our subjectivity, however, we can tend to accept imposed and fixed ideas of who we are and how we should act. (McGushin 2014). So, for Foucault, opposition to a performative agenda, where it constrains creative practice in manner that would cause a teacher to teach in a set way, could be part of an active 'care of the self'. Foucault sees that as a positive and vital process. There is potential in such practices, for what could be termed an 'oppositional agency'; an agency that is birthed and grows, for some, in the very pressures, that for others, are constraining at best, but catastrophic at worst. There is an almost heroic picture here of what could be termed 'creative non-conformity'. I would love to point to lots of examples from the participants but that would be an exaggeration. There are hints: Mike, as he approached Key Stage 1 literacy through model making in the face of some opposition from his class teacher (chapter 5); Sonia as she reimagined her views of what constitutes 'success' for her pupils (chapter 5); my own approaches to assessment through drama and Stuart's 'pioneer' response (chapter 6). These are far from acts of heroism but do point to little exercises of agency in the face of some performative opposition.

So, creativity and performativity can be seen to be in direct opposition to or conflict with each other. Where this is the case, the flight response is largely a negative experience. The fight response may well be equally negative, but at least has potential for agency. However, being realistic, especially for student and early career teachers, to live in that kind of conflict is exhausting and dehumanising (Humphreys 2017). It is an even harder context in which to thrive.

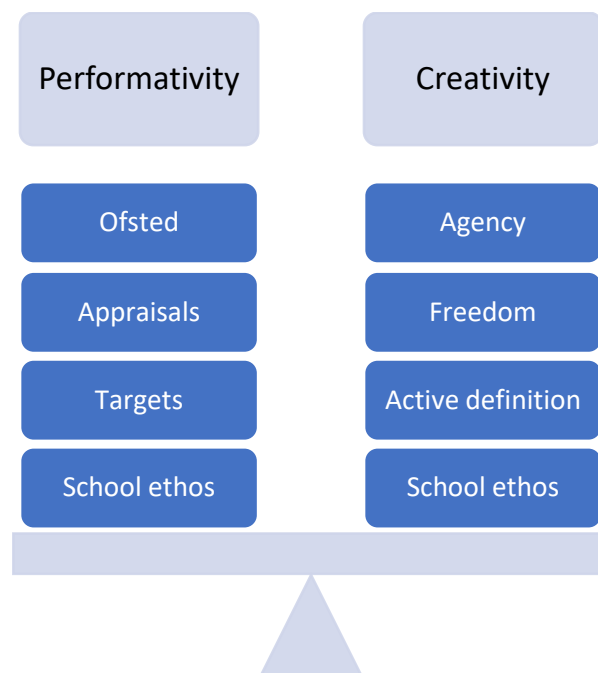
Attention now turn to the second position; the argument that creativity and performativity can be seen as being in various states of balance.

### 7.3.2 Creativity and performativity: states of balance and productive tension

In the context of primary education and primary ITE, creativity and performativity can be seen as being in varying states of balance, relative to each other. Based on the findings from this research, these states of relative balance are not fixed; they can fluctuate for any individual, school or ITE department dependent upon circumstances. Stuart for example (chapter 6) felt that performativity was dominating his agenda working in upper Key Stage 2. He was looking forward to a move to teaching Year 3, where he perceived his creative freedom would be greater; a shift in relative balance.

The relationship between creativity and performativity, seen in this way, can, as for the previous section, be represented visually (figure 6)

**Figure 6: Creativity and performativity seen in relative states of balance**



The model in figure 6 is not an exhaustive representation of the factors on each side of the 'scales'; it does however represent some of the key factors highlighted in chapters 4-6 and the literatures discussed. Whilst not dissimilar to the model of, and arguments around, conflict in the previous section, this perspective is different. It

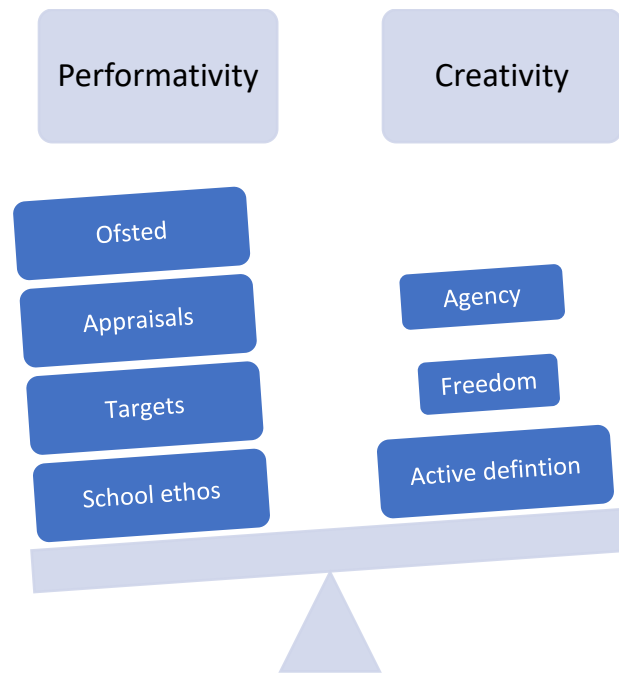
can be characterised as a relationship of fluctuations. It could be visualised as a series of varying points on a continuum, but to suggest that there are end points on such a continuum, would be to suggest positions of absolute performativity and absolute creativity. I do not believe that such points exist in the world of primary education.

How might this represent at least some of the realities discussed in this research?

Firstly, for example, school (and ITE) ethos has been discussed as a critical influencer on creative freedoms - both positive and negative - for every participant. In figure 6, therefore it is shown on both 'sides'. Applying the model to the participants, the effect can be illustrated.

For Simon, (chapter 4) the ethos of his school context became so performatively orientated, that teaching methods were prescribed in order to secure the desired pupil data outcomes. This was driven by the school leaders, in turn driven by perceptions of Ofsted expectations. For Simon, the model may look more like figure 7.

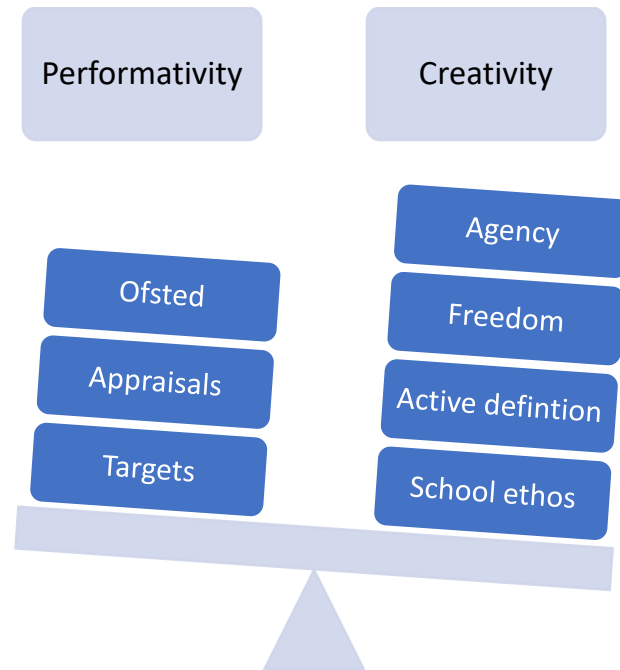
Figure 7: The balance model applied to Simon



It is arguable that this representation should also have agency and freedom removed, as the evidence suggests this to be largely the case. They remain however, albeit greatly diminished. Simon still retained his core belief in and passionate views about creativity (his active definition), but the balance was overwhelmed by the performative pressures and ethos on the side.

For Evelyn (chapter 5), her experience of a school ethos that promoted freedoms and creative agency, mean the situation is reversed (figure 8). It is worth noting, that this does not try to suggest a situation devoid of performative pressure, but rather a school ethos, empowering freedom and agency, in which creativity can flourish in teaching and learning, in the midst of performative pressures.



**Figure 8: The balance model applied to Evelyn**

It would be tedious (but nonetheless valid) to present a model for every participant. The key point is, that we are viewing a model of fluctuation. For Stuart (Chapter 6) I would argue that there would be a shift in balance as he moved from year 6 to year 3, with the resultant reduction in end of key stage data pressures. Mike and Sonia (Chapter 5) especially after qualifying, both experienced fluctuations of freedom and creative agency. Whilst the balance may have now settled more towards the creativity side, that balance has also been the other way, as NQTs. Carla and I would see ourselves tipped towards the freedom and creativity side at the time of interview, as the departmental ethos has shifted that way (chapter 6). However, four years prior to the interview, the balance would have been more tilted towards performativity.

Whilst there is validity in the balance model as a representational tool, what can it offer in understanding agency? I would argue, that it helps to see how the relationship between creativity and performativity is a dynamic and changing one, open to the vicissitudes of the contemporary primary education context; the 'slings

and arrows of outrageous fortune' (Shakespeare 1603). Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' is widely regarded as a reference to a contemplation of the relative benefits of living with the 'slings and arrows' or alternatively, dying (Martin 2019). In this context such a contemplation is over dramatic to say the least. However, 'being' is, I would argue at the very heart of agency. This model and how it represents the experience of my case study participants, holds up in the Shakespearian. 'To be' - creatively agentic – 'or not to be? That is the question'. At the positive extremes of the participants' experiences, they have been able to 'be' in the midst of slings and arrows (Evelyn, chapter 5 and Carla chapter 6). At the negative extremes, Simon (chapter 4), was not able, or more accurately was not allowed/enabled, to 'be' as a teacher. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune (neoliberal, performative logic) were too much to suffer. In such circumstances, teachers and pupils could be viewed, at least to an extent, as 'victims' (Humphreys 2017).

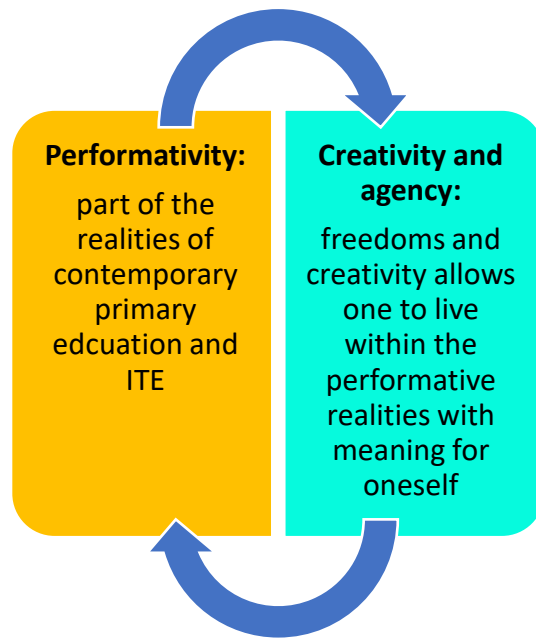
The key element that this model illustrates (coupled with the Shakespearian allusion), is the reality for many teachers (extrapolating from the implications of my case study), that their freedom and creative agency, is to a greater or lesser extent, subject to shifts in 'fortune'. This fortune may be manifested in the circumstances of school placement, or employment setting, in terms of age group and/or school ethos. It may be manifested in the relative perceived quality of a school or ITE department under Ofsted judgements. It may be manifested in the level of freedom and agency that school or ITE leaders feel, relative to their performative targets and measure. The agency of the students and teachers can be seen (as is the case in several of the participants) to lie, at least to an extent, in their settings. This significance of setting, in turn, reflects the accountability regime in schools, which has been growing steadily since the 1988 Education Reform Act. This growth has moved teachers and education leaders towards being data-oriented bodies rather than agents of

professional autonomy. Over three decades, there has been a shift in accountability from the professional self, to external bodies such as Ofsted (Hayler 2017). This in turn has pressured school leaders to apply performative accountabilities to teachers, who in turn apply these to pupils.

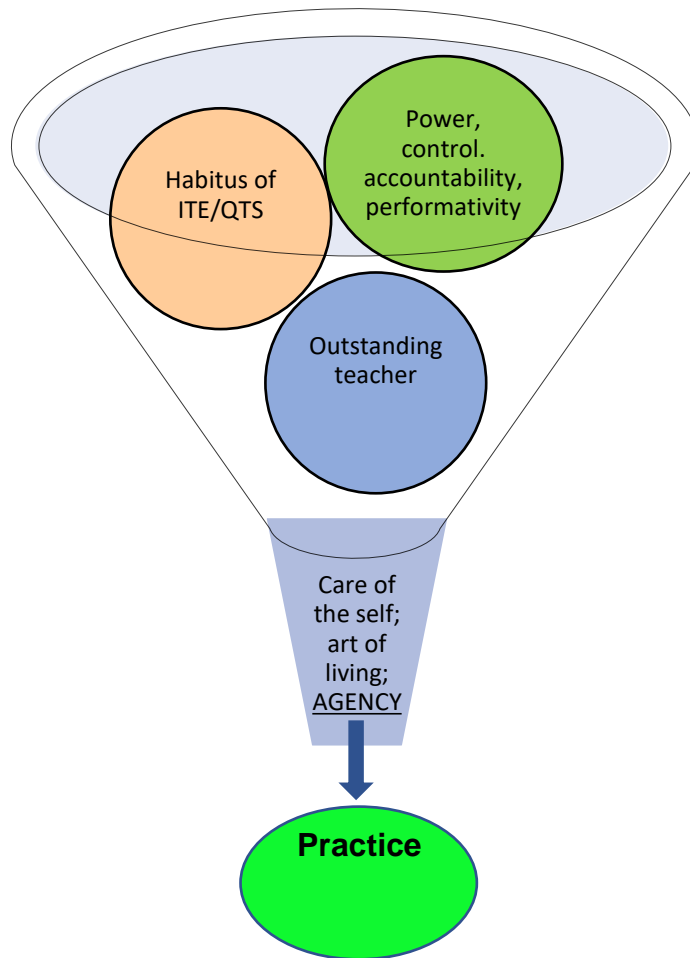
Whilst the balance model may offer representation, it does not seem to offer much hope for greater agency, other than a fairly blunt conclusion that we 'shift the balance' from the performative to the creative. So, a third much more optimistic and agentic perspective on the creativity-performativity relationship is needed; one that goes beyond representation and offers insight into possible resolution.

### **7.3.3 Creativity and performativity: peaceful co-existence**

The context in which this research has been conducted and written is one of educational performativity. The neoliberal context and QTS focus, make that a part of life in ITE. Students want to become teachers; at present they have to achieve QTS by meeting the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). This is the context in which I have worked for many years and currently choose to continue to do so. I am motivated by helping students to become effective and inspiring teachers and so for children, to have the best experiences of primary education possible. I do believe that high stakes, performative accountability systems threaten that. However, I find it more pragmatic to explore how creativity and performativity can co-exist, so that conflict between the two is ameliorated and positive education for young children can flourish. This leads to the third model (figure 9). Here creativity and performativity are seen as co-existing, seeking agency in a more peaceful and in a less confrontational manner than in the previous two sections.

**Figure 9: Creativity and performativity in co-existence**

At first sight it is a simple model; rather than two things in opposition or in/out of balance, performativity is seen as having an influence on creativity, which in turn is envisaged as contributing to the achievement of performative measures. This contribution to performativity has two key elements. Firstly, there is the notion, expressed by most of the participants, that creative teaching and learning can deliver the kinds of performative data that most schools want or perceive that they need. As Stuart said (section 6.1.1.1), 'creativity is my favourite way of achieving progress'. Secondly, where creative freedom and agency exists for leaders, teachers and pupils, they can live, work and thrive within the performative culture in a way that makes sense for them. Figure 10, below, begins to represent how teachers and leaders may find that meaningful sense in the midst of performativity.

**Figure 10: Making sense of performativity**

In this representation, the external influences of habitus (Bourdieu), power and control (Foucault) and the psychoanalytical perspectives (Lacan) discussed in chapter 2 are brought together in the context of agency and practice. In this case however, the model is one of co-existence and meaning making rather than of opposition or balance. The model envisages the combination of influences on students and teachers, all of which have been discussed and evidenced in chapter 2, 4, 5 and 6. The model then envisages these influences, passing through the 'filter' of the Foucauldian 'care of the self' in order to cultivate the 'art of living'.

Thus, for the student/teacher, active self-formation is the process whereby the performative influences are mediated, allowing more authentic practice to emerge. Foucault argues that subjects are constituted on the basis of apparatuses (the

relationships of power and technologies) and discourses (the rules and procedures for the establishment of “truth” in any given time or context) (Milchman and Rosenberg 2011). These apparatuses and discourses are seen ‘mixing’ in this model, to impose a form of performatively oriented subjectivity. The ‘care of the self’ (as discussed in chapter 2) is seen by Foucault, as the way that one may escape the processes of imposed subjectivity. It is an ongoing act of self-formation, creating an ‘art of life’ (Batters 2011). Foucault sees this ‘care of the self’ as an ethical obligation and a concern for truth, through frank speech. To *not* do this, is to allow a domination by external influences, which Foucault would see as deontological (Robinson 2019) as subjectivity is an active becoming rather than a fixed being. If there is no resistance to these influences, the individual will be in a state of subjection (control by some else) rather than the process of subjectivity (self-formation) (Ball and Olmedo 2013). They are not ‘becoming’; the domination threatens their sense of who they are.

So, in the representation of figure 10, ‘care of the self’ is a part of a process by which the individual student/teacher makes sense of the potentially deontological performative, controlling influences operating in the specific context of their practice. It is in frank speech, the standing up for what one believes, that self-formation, through ‘care of the self’, can work. Thus viewed, ‘care of the self’ can be seen as a form of resistance to the ‘new forms of subjectivity’ (Ball and Olmedo 2013; p.85) produced by neoliberal reforms in education.

In the representation of figure 10, the ‘making sense’ of tensions between creativity and performativity, may or may not include resistance. This, I would argue, is a more realistic proposition for students and early career teachers, who have the additional layer of performativity to make sense of, in order to qualify (QTS) and to

continue their career (successful completion of NQT induction; DfE 2018).

Resistance is, I would argue, harder in this position. To make sense of the influence in a manner that has meaning for them, may not represent the fullness of 'care of the self', but captures much of its spirit. This can be seen in the case studies. Stuart (chapter 6) took bold approaches to ITE assessment. He took the risk of approaching an assessment through the medium of drama, rather than the usual mode of PowerPoint presentation. This enhanced his engagement and also his outcome. Mike (chapter 5) who taught in his own ways on placement. He used approaches to teaching writing that foregrounded oracy and developed oracy through practical work. This was in contrast to normal practices in that class, but he was able to show his supervising class teacher the success of his approaches. Sonia (chapter 5), who allowed greater pupil choice and voice in their learning. Compared to her previous placements, she was able to recognise and promote pupils' success in ways that she had previously not envisaged.

Figure 10 also involves the 'art of living' as part of the 'filter', by which authentic, meaningful teaching practice may emerge from the combined influences of contemporary education systems. Ruti (2015) argues against any notion that the social production of subjectivity denies us agency. The 'art of living' does not seek to avoid, or even just resist, the 'lack' produced by the (potentially) dominant influences of educational performativity. It is a confrontation with lack, in a way that has meaning for us. Ruti (2009) defines 'agency' in terms of the level of creative freedom that we have and therefore our ability to escape the dominant structures in which we live and work. The 'art of living' opens up the chance to reclaim such agency. The relevance of the models (in figures 9 and 10) to the context of ITE and primary education, lies in the naming, confronting and challenging of those performative forces. This is different to pure resistance. It is not a focus on dominating our

circumstances, but living with and within them, in a way that has meaning for us.

The other and crucial reason why these models have validity in the context of this research, lies in Ruti's argument about the inextricable links between agency and creativity. The definition of agency above is expressed in terms of the degree of 'creative freedom' we have. Ruti (2009) also argues that it is in the confrontation with lack that we develop agency. But the argument goes further, asserting that it is through our creativity that we address lack for ourselves and that without any sense of lack, we would have little or no creative drive (Ruti 2012). Creativity both requires and encapsulates what, for Ruti, is meant by entering into the 'art of living'.

So, for the student/teacher, this development of agency – of creative freedom – to work within a performative environment but in a way that makes sense for the individual and their pupils, requires their creativity. However, that is, in itself, an act of creativity; a creative act of self-formation. We can see, throughout chapter 4, 5 and 6, the participants who have been able to do this and so practice in creative ways that make sense for them and their pupils; Mike, Sonia, Evelyn and Stuart. We can also see those who, in the face of performative constraints and pressure, have had more of a struggle to do this, in ways that make sense and are authentic for them, especially, Simon and, to an extent, Sarah. They have not been able to engage fully in creative acts of self-formation and in turn have not been able to approach teaching and learning in their own, agentic, creative ways; for some, the result has been devastating.

So, the 'art of living' becomes, in this context, '*the art of teaching*'. The word 'art' would typically be regarded as 'a skill at doing a specified thing, typically one acquired through practice' (Oxford Living Dictionary n.d.). Art can also be defined as 'the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination' (Oxford Living



Dictionary n.d.). So, conceptualised in this way, ‘the art of teaching’ is a skill, an expression or application of human creativity and is simultaneously a creative act of self-formation. *That* is where creativity lies in teaching and learning, in the midst of performativity. Not just in oppositional conflict; not just in juggling and balancing potentially competing pressures and agendas. It lies in the ability to develop and live out creative freedom and agency within the realities of contemporary schooling, with authenticity and meaning.

I would expect challenge to this on a least two (contrasting) counts. From those whose focus is on ‘standards’ as measured in data and targets, this perspective could be viewed as simply advocating students/teachers to ‘do their own thing’. As long as they feel good, then all is well. To confront that argument, the following would be offered. Whilst in places being critical of performative accountabilities, and certainly critical of where their application has significantly negative effects on teachers and teaching, this thesis has never sought to side-step performativity. In fact, the argument has been made, repeatedly, that the perspectives here are about making sense *within* these contemporary agendas. The participants, from the most to the least agentic, have all been working within primary ITE and English primary schools, all subject to the same inspections, targets and national standards. What is clear, is that when students, teachers, school and ITE leaders have meaningful creative freedom and agency, teaching and learning shows creative freedoms and flourishes, *within* the regimes of performativity and standards, however measured. Where performativity over dominates, often due to the influence of school leaders, freedoms are constrained, teachers are not empowered and, as we have seen in chapter 4, they potentially do not flourish professionally. Test scores and other performative measure may be achieved, but to equate those necessarily with quality

of education is, at best misleading, at worst a subjection of teachers (Holloway 2018) and an anti-democratic agenda (Clarke 2012).

I would also expect challenge, from those who may feel that there is insufficient critique and rejection of the performative agenda in education. To these, I would offer a very similar argument. There is no argument *for* performative measures in this thesis. There is however, no strong and sustained argument against performative measures. That should not be taken to mean, that I agree with them. I have argued against the 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1990) where these measures are applied in a high stakes fashion that is prescriptive and constraining of practice (e.g. Simon in chapter 4). However, I have also been very open that I, as a leader in ITE, am part of that performative apparatus. I am a teacher and teacher educator as well as researcher. Therefore, for me, the 'art' of living, teaching, even researching, lies in exploring creativity *within* the realities of performative education. To explore, within that context, for me, at this time, has meaning and authenticity, as much as others might see resistance. This may appear to be what Moore (2018; p.112) refers to as

virtuous pragmatism –the (necessary) justification of retreat ... one strategy whereby we can justify to ourselves acts of compliance with which we may otherwise feel very uncomfortable, in order that we can remain likeable to ourselves as well as to other people.'

This may be true to an extent but should not necessarily be seen as negative. For me, I am currently choosing to work within a performative environment, as a recipient and as an instigator of performative pressures, as is almost any teacher or leader in a school, college or university context. I am not justifying a retreat from proposing a model that challenges performativity. I am explaining, how proposing a model that seeks to work within a performative environment is one that fits my context and that of my students.

To that end, attention now turns to a development from the three models of the creativity and performativity relationship discussed so far in this final chapter (figures 5, 6 and 9). A model will be presented, that proposes a more authentic way forwards for ITE to promote meaningful and deep teacher creativity, within that complex relationship.

#### **7.4 A model for ITE**

ITE necessarily focusses on knowledge for teachers; that which is regarded by others as important for teacher to have e.g. subject knowledge in the national curriculum (DfE 2013). Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) argue that there is also a contrasting 'teacher knowledge' that is 'composed by teachers in and through their life experiences, in school and out of school, over time, place and relationships (p.62). Thus, they argue for space in ITE, for student teachers to inquire into their teacher knowledge and so be better placed to reflect critically about knowledge for teachers. A case can be made that, knowledge for teachers and teacher knowledge equate broadly to the performativity and freedom/agency that has been discussed in this thesis. I would also argue that an over focus on knowledge for teachers, necessarily neglects the development of teacher knowledge. Becoming a teacher develops from personal values and beliefs on one hand and the norms and expectations of ITE institutions and schools on the other (Leeferink et al 2019). Therefore, for student and early career teachers to survive and thrive in their chosen profession, in a way that has meaning and authenticity, requires ITE to take responsibility for developing that teacher knowledge. This could seek to go beyond an instrumental approach, that forefronts teacher standards, to a degree that consumes and imposes identity and agency. Shaefer and Clandinin (2019) reported on their development of student and early career teacher 'stories to live by'. In these,

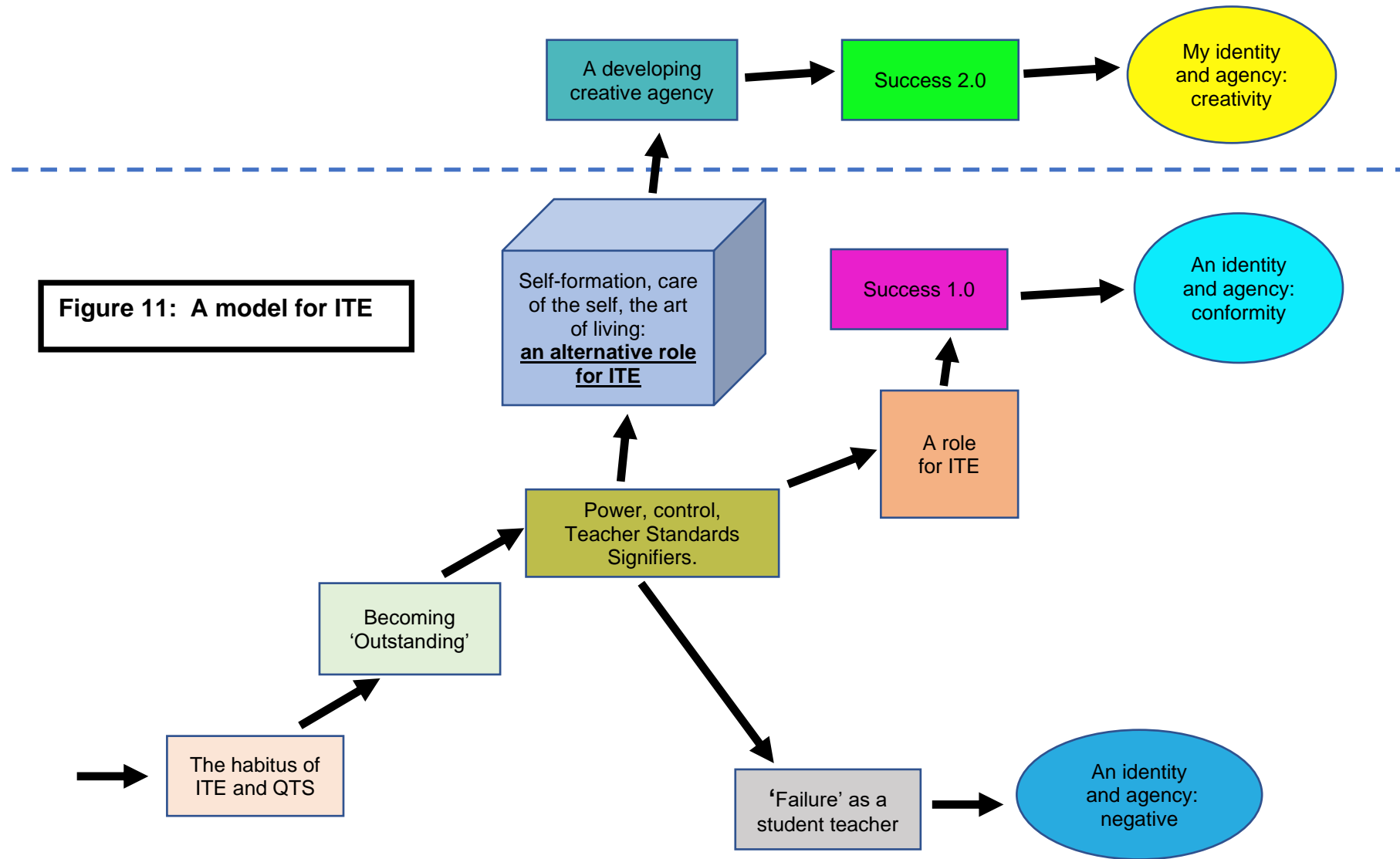
the teachers developed their 'stories' of what it meant to be a teacher and teaching, as a way to live out the stories. However, in a close parallel to Simon's experience (chapter 4), 'when teachers could not sustain their stories to live by in the professional context, their stories to live by shifted to stories to leave by and they left teaching' (Schaefer and Clandinin 2019; p.54). So, to seek, through ITE provision, to develop teachers who continue to work in the profession, in meaningful, authentic and therefore fulfilling ways, would be a timely focus for two reasons. Firstly, to address the current recruitment and retention crisis (Adams 2018). Secondly, to build a workforce, not based on mere performance or survival, but on human thriving and flourishing, developing passions for teaching and deep pupil learning, not just test/exam success.

Figure 11 (below) draws together the theoretical foundations and research findings of this thesis, to propose a role for ITE, which could promote the thriving and flourishing of student and early career teachers, within a performative environment. The model is not intended as a radical rethink of ITE. It has been clear that authenticity for me, in my current role, is to look for ways of promoting agency that lie *within* the constraints of the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012), Ofsted inspections and the award of QTS.

The model will now be explained in more detail, before some of the practical elements are discussed. Starting at the bottom left corner, students enter ITE and its 'habitus'. At this point the 'inculcation' (Bourdieu 1990; Power 1999) begins, as expectations of professionalism, subject knowledge, school placement etc. are articulated. It is not argued that this is a negative process, more a necessity, if starting a course oriented to a professional qualification.

Very quickly, the discourse in ITE is around 'outstanding teaching and learning'.

Again, the focus of ITE is to produce the best teachers possible. To qualify in England, the Teacher Standards must be met. It is not a requirement for ITE to grade against standards, but it is widespread practice and has long been the practice in my ITE context.



I would argue, that for the majority of new student teachers, the initial goal to be a great teacher is given form by the discourse (Zizek 2006; Ruti, 2012; 2015). In the case of my QTS students, this initial goal *may* be the unattainable idea of being/becoming an 'outstanding' teacher, graded according to performative measures and standards. I have said, I am part of - and am seeking meaning and authenticity in my work within - that performative apparatus.

Moving on in the model, early in the ITE 'journey', the 'signifiers' (language) of the Teacher Standards, lesson appraisals etc. begin to intrude on these early and often quite vague ideas about being a great teacher (Hewiston 2010); to attain this, the criteria are specified. However, in a sense, these goals remain unattainable; even if the criteria are met, the standards remain a cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu 1990) and are affirmed as met only in relatively fleeting moment of time and context (e.g. a school placement). To claim that an outstanding grading means "I am an outstanding teacher", a definition fixed for ever, is misleading at best. At worst, it can be regarded as an unconscious fantasy (Ruti 2009; Moore 2018). With 'echoes of Bourdieu's habitus' (Moore 2018; p. 150), such unconscious fantasies can lead to one finding a comfortable place within any structure of rules and norms, where conformity and acceptance of the norms means that the norms can be left unchallenged and internalised.

However, once the signifiers are in operation, power and control is, at least potentially, exercised over students; if they want to be graded as outstanding then ITE articulates what is required. This may include the simple everyday discourse of ITE tutors, the views of school mentors, pupil progress targets, the Teacher Standards, lesson appraisals, grading criteria and Ofsted inspections; the list is not exhaustive, but it does reflect a very performative emphasis.

The ITE model (figure 11) now diverts in three potential directions. If the standards are not met, the power and control apparatus will lead to “failure as a student teacher”. Put simply, if a student cannot meet the Teacher Standards, they will fail school placements and will have to exit a QTS course. As the model suggest, this contributes to an identity and agency, probably in a negative fashion. The desire and journey to become a teacher has at least faltered, if not come to an end.

The second branch, following the more horizontal direction to the right, leads to ‘A role for ITE’. It is a role that focusses on the Teacher Standards and helping student teachers to achieve against these, to the best of their ability. It is a role of compliance and conformity. It is one where student/teacher identities and subjectivities are formed within the standards discourse of ITE (Atkinson 2004). However, this is a perfectly valid role; I am not suggesting that it is wrong. It is a role that can lead to strong outcomes for student teachers, in terms of their professional grading, course completion and employment. Moreover, this is at least a key part of what student teachers generally want from ITE and pay £27000+ for in student fees. If pursued diligently, by staff and students, it will result in success; graduation, QTS and employment as a teacher. I have labelled this as “Success 1.0”. It is a positive position. As a course leader in ITE, I would argue that this is the position of my ITE department and one of which I am proud. Our 2017 recent inspection (Ofsted 2017) judged and reported this success; I am proud also of the inspection report. This “success 1.0” can help our student teachers to leave with an identity and agency as an NQT, and typically 98% of them graded as “good” or “outstanding” on their final



placements (appendix 5) They will enter the world of work as a primary school teacher.

However, as we have seen from this research, in the contemporary performative climate, some will thrive, some will survive, some will struggle, and some will find no option but to leave the profession. My argument is, that “success 1.0” can lead to an identity and agency that is based primarily on conformity to expectations and standards, neglecting the creative agency and freedoms that allow teachers to teach in ways that have meaning and authenticity for them.

So, returning to the model (figure 11), there is a third branch from the power, control etc element. This branch envisages a subtly different role for ITE. Let me be clear; this is *not* an argument to drop the Teacher Standards, ignore Ofsted criteria for the inspection of ITE or reject lesson appraisals and summative grading of placements. At present, these are all part of my reality and the reality of my students; I do not see them going away nor do I believe that they necessarily should. What *must* happen in ITE, is that performative measures such as these, cease to dominate the discourse and practice and discourse, in the way and to the extent, that they currently do.

I would argue exactly the same for schools. The argument is not about resistance to such measures as these, but it is one of resistance to the value and therefore the power assigned to them. Taking up this challenge, potentially at least, lies with ITE and school leaders, more so than with some of the external accountabilities, such as Ofsted, that are often blamed for constrained practice. So, ITE needs to develop a more explicit role in supporting the

development of 'the art of living' or as reimagined earlier in this chapter, the 'art of teaching. That is, when student teachers are able to develop ways of finding practice that is authentic to their beliefs and values but can also thrive in the performative climates in which they work. This requires ITE leaders to facilitate student teachers' engagement, explicitly, in processes of self-reflection leading to further self-formation. It also requires ITE leaders to facilitate the practice of tutors and student teachers that allow this to develop. Such approaches, far from being contrary to performative measures, would actually enhance the performative outcomes by which we are measured. It as a matter of encouraging agency and fostering freedom to practice authentically and have the confidence to allow those approaches to stand up to performative scrutiny. That is a world away from practice that is dominated and dictated by performative measures.

As the model suggests, this could allow for the development of what has been termed throughout this thesis as 'creative agency'. In figure 11, this crosses an imagined line, leading to "success 2.0". I have been clear, that "success 1.0" is not negative. I argue, however, that what is conceptualised here as "success 2.0" is better and stronger. This is because it is a success that is both based on and leads to the development of an identity and agency, that is more one of self-formation rather than conformity. It is an agency that is more likely to allow teachers to thrive and flourish; where the teacher's soul is not dominated by and overwhelmed by the terrors of performativity. Is there still conformity and compliance here? Yes. Without that, there is no QTS award, there are no NQTs. That is the reality. This model envisages a subtly different, but more

sustainable way of achieving that. So, what would or could be the 'role for ITE' represented in this third branch of the model, leading to 'success 2.0'?

#### **7.4.1 An alternative role for ITE?**

My argument is, that alongside the normal, probably necessary elements of ITE associated with the current requirements for QTS, there is substantial space to develop creativity;

to explore what it might mean to be creative in the classroom: creative as a learner, creative as a teacher, creative as a colleague and possibly even creative as an institution (Bibby 2018; p.15).

This is to go well beyond looking at creativity as lying in the arts and beyond creativity being seen as teaching through cross-curricular themes. It is to go beyond the imposition of any fixed notion of creativity and creative practice in teaching and learning. Bibby (2018; p.15) argues that creativity

concerns an attitude, a form of relationship with one's self and one's own interests and desires ; and with the ideas and desires of others. Creativity is expressed in our attitude to curiosities (our own and other people's) and to demands on our time and attention. The creative life ... may sit well or uncomfortably in professional contexts – that is a matter for personal reflection.

Throughout this thesis, the idea of 'active definitions' of creativity has been discussed, the development of which has been part of the *Creativity in Primary Education* module, around which this research has been centred. This has focussed on co-construction, with student teachers, of new conceptualisations of creativity, ones that have authenticity for them. These 'active definitions, applied to professional practice, have been shown in this study to be important influencers of student teacher and early career teacher creative practice. These

creative lives, as Bibby argues above, have not always sat well in their professional contexts. In some cases (e.g. Simon and Sarah) these personal conceptualisations have been almost, or totally, overwhelmed by performative pressures. Where they have been effective, however, teachers have developed strong agencies and freedoms in their teaching. Craft et al (2014) in developing a model of creative pedagogies, highlight co-construction, ownership and agency as central to this. In particular, they highlight learner agency. I would argue that to facilitate and promote learner agency, especially in a performative climate, requires significant teacher agency. Ruti defines agency (quoted earlier in chapter 2) as;

How much creative freedom we have with respect to our lives, to what extent we can be the authors of our own meanings and how (if at all) we might be able to escape the dominant sociocultural structures that surround us. (2009; p.5);

Applying this to ITE and primary education, in a dominant performative culture, agency and creative freedom for teacher and learner go hand in hand. If pedagogy is simply driven by quantifiable measures of standards and quality this will never happen; it will be seen as too risky. Where there is freedom and agency, there are possibilities: 'we have to be able to travel hopefully if we are to take the risks and enjoy the process' (Bibby 2018; p. 62).

So, for the student and early career teacher, developing creative practice involves a form of relationship with oneself (Bibby 2018). It involves exploring possibilities for change as a form of 'care of the self' (Clarke 2009; 2013), as an alternative to that which is produced by conformity to a performative apparatus, focussed on surveillance (Vintges 2014). Developing creative practice involves a confrontation with 'lack', that sense of something missing, uncertainty or

anxiety, in this context most likely produced by the negative impacts of performative pressures. It is in that confrontation with lack, not in the confrontation with performativity per se, that the drivers of creative endeavour are found (Ruti 2009). Creativity and agency are not only complementary to and necessary for each other, but the development of agency, that self-formation as beings of (at least some) freedom, is in itself, a fundamentally creative act. It is the facilitation, encouragement and promotion of this act of self-formation, that needs to lie at the heart of a new role for ITE, forefronting student teacher agency and the co-construction of the 'teacher knowledge' (Schaefer and Clandinin 2019), discussed at the start of this section.

## **7.5 Final arguments**

Encouraging a creative approach to teaching and learning (e.g. imagination, originality, problem solving, value; Sharp 2004) is crucial in ITE and schools, but without strong creative agency, teachers will only be able to take these approaches, when a performative culture allows it.

The freedom with which participants have been able to develop their creative practice has been a function of their own sense of agency and the degree to which agency has been afforded to them by school or department leaders. The key here, is the extent of leaders' agency and the use to which that is put. That in itself, is a whole new research project. For now, I would reflect on the research findings of Burkhauser et al (2013), focussed on the foundations for successful school leadership. Their report is very oriented towards performance, monitoring and evaluation. However, they conclude, that increased autonomy may allow leaders to lead more effectively, and that

without at least some degree of autonomy, this ability may be restricted.

Autonomy and agency are not synonymous but are closely related. Leaders, like teachers, given more autonomy, will develop greater agency; agendas that are theirs rather than somebody else's. This is the kind of leadership to which Peacock (2015) refers;

creative, principled leadership and the importance of the underlying ethos in a school; one in which there is a 'stimulating curriculum in an era of high stakes accountability (p.25).

Although a small sample, what the data across chapters 4, 5 and 6 suggests is that where the teachers felt they had more freedom, autonomy and agency to practice creatively, this was underpinned by school leaders and a school ethos who allowed that; the agency of the leaders was "passed down" as it were, to the teachers and even then to the learners. What is beyond the scope of this research, is absolute clarity as to why those leaders felt different levels of freedom and agency. The participants reflected on this, as has been discussed. Those that felt the most constrained in their practice (Simon, Sarah and Stuart) were working in environment where leaders' focus was dominated by performative data; in some cases, because the level of attainment and progress indicated by the data was seen as too low; in some where high levels (outstanding grading) were being pursued. In these cases, the goal was performative measures, not a rounded, full and balanced education for the children. Studying middle leaders in English primary schools, Hammersley-Fletcher and Strain (2011), found cases of teachers who did not comply with headteachers' requirements and who left their school or were side-lined. In these cases, they found evidence of coercion where cultures of compliance and control suppressed dissent. They also found evidence of mimicry, where the

practice of schools deemed to be successful, were encouraged in other schools. These examples resonate, especially with the experiences of Simon in chapter 4.

All of the contexts studied in this thesis have pupil/student data outcomes, Ofsted inspections and other internal and external surveillance and evaluation systems. In some (e.g. Evelyn and Carla), the performative measures were being managed and achieved in a way that allowed a degree of freedom and agency in teaching and learning. In others (e.g. Simon) the measures had become so dominant and directing of practice, that freedoms had almost disappeared, in favour of prescribed teaching approaches and oppressive surveillance. In those cases, the high stakes assessment regime (Myatt 2016; Harlen 2014, Alexander 2010) had reached a level at which it was dominant to the exclusion of creative freedoms. Burkhauser et al (2013) concluded that the degree of autonomy and agency amongst school leaders could be a significant factor in the effectiveness of their leadership. This thesis argues that it is also a significant factor in the degree of freedom afforded to teachers; where this is given, teachers teach creatively, engaging their pupils, allowing them agency in their learning. Where this is not given, teachers feel mistrusted, alienated and constrained into forms of practice that deny their values.

I have tried throughout this thesis to be honest about the tensions that I experience as an ITE leader, teacher and researcher. I try to encourage and facilitate creative freedoms for my student teachers through my own teaching and ITE leadership. At the same time, I lead a QTS based course that revolves around enabling students to gain QTS, by meeting the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012). I literally have to impose a prescribed set of criteria that determine what

teaching and professionalism look like. I place students into schools where their performative agendas of pupil progress and outcome data, targets and inspections, impact significantly on practice, through what schools require or see as “effective” teaching and learning. How do I resolve those tensions? The honest answer is that I do not resolve them entirely; I ameliorate them at best.

For me, they are part of my professional ‘lack’. Being true to this research, I use the ‘lack’ to fuel my creative endeavours, as lack carries with it the potential for agency and creativity (Ruti 2006). These endeavours include: promoting creativity explicitly through the focus creativity module; my own creative approaches to teaching in ITE; the promotion of creative approaches to assessment, already discussed; this thesis itself. But the most important one, is using my freedoms and agency to try to ensure that student teachers are not moulded into one form of teaching, that primarily serves to satisfy data outcomes. I do not believe that I can change the overall performative climate in which we work. I can influence my little corner of ITE and the students within that.

So, in the ‘art of living/teaching/researching’ I choose to work within a performative climate as part of my reality, but in ways that make sense and have authenticity for me. The role for ITE discussed earlier in this chapter, is a significant part of that meaning making, along with colleagues and student teachers, allowing my creative agency to develop. As Ruti argues, this may not be agency in the traditional sense, but it is self-actualisation in a constructionist context. That is my deepest expression of creativity and the one I want for my students, colleagues and teachers; a creativity made possible by



the subject's capacity to slacken its watch upon the gates of reason, so as to allow an alternative reality to reveal itself' (Ruti 2006; p. 199).

The 'gates of reason' are all too often seen as achieving pupil/student progress and attainment targets and desired Ofsted inspection outcomes; the logic of performativity (Clarke and Moore, 2013).

We need a new logic, a logic of creativity. This would be one where creativity in education is seen, not just as a means to a performative end and as something necessary for the future economic well-being of society (Mould 2018) but is seen as a process of self-formation of leaders, teachers and learners. Creativity can be 'the means, individually and collectively, to live differently' (Hawkins 2017). This kind of creativity could allow teachers to practice with freedom, trust and expressions of their own creativity; not driven by performative measures, but still achieving them, using the freedoms that we do have in education.

Ofsted have their inspection criteria (e.g. Ofsted 2019); the national curriculum (2013) sets out what is to be taught in the primary curriculum; the Teacher Standards (DfE 2012) sets out criteria for the award of QTS and ongoing teacher evaluation. I could go on. It is too easy for ITE and schools to justify practices by saying for example 'this is what Ofsted require'. The uncomfortable, maybe inconvenient truth, in a world where it is common practice just to criticise statutory forms of accountability, is that Ofsted, whilst they set criteria for judgment, *do not specify how that is to be done*. Nor does the national curriculum, the Teachers Standards and so forth. At least a significant part of the problem of neoliberal accountabilities, is the way that we react as teachers, student teachers, teacher educators and educational leaders. When we respond in ways that allow the accountability structures to dominate discourse

and practice, we lose agency and any authenticity in our work. If we take advantage and control of even some of the freedoms that we *do* have, then we can practice with at least some agency and authenticity. That is where the true virtue of creativity in education lies; in challenging narrow beliefs and practices that purport to act in the pursuit of quality and standards. Instead, we should be developing strong senses of creative identity and agency that allows us to develop fully our creative expression in teaching and learning, working within constraints, but using the freedoms that we *do* have but often ignore. As Allen and Simms (2018) argue, leaders need to ‘relearn the art of trust and refocus their energies away from management by numbers onto supporting the professional growth of staff’ (p. 121). It is only through these strong senses of identity and agency that we operate in Fromm’s (1976) ‘being’ mode and not just the ‘having’ mode, and have the professional confidence to practice creatively in the face of the terrors of performativity; not to thwart them but to turn them from terrors, to just part of the professional context, but not one that crushes our souls as teachers (Raymond 2018).

Mould (2018; pp. 185-186) argues that

If creativity is about the power to create something from nothing, then believing in impossible things is its most critical component. We need to believe that impossible worlds can be reached, if these impossibilities can ever be realised and become lived experiences.

Mould is writing within an overall argument that creativity, as a concept, has been appropriated by capitalist market forces and heralded as the way forwards in economic development. He argues that this prevents his vision of creativity above. I am not arguing fully alongside Mould, as I have been clear that my

vision of creativity is one operating within the performative educational climate; I have justified that stance. However, I do share Mould's view about the need to see 'impossible worlds'. For me, performativity is so embedded in education, that a school and ITE system without it, seems *beyond* impossible. For me, the impossible in my professional contexts is a world where performativity is not of the high stakes that has been discussed and where it does not dominate and determine practice at a systemic level. The impossible is a system where creative freedom is allowed, encouraged and championed for teachers and learners, with the ultimate aim of providing a rich, challenging, inspiring education for our children, not an aim of achieving targets or inspection grades. But if creativity, as Mould argues, is about seeing impossible worlds, then what I see as impossibilities must become possible. There are pockets where this happens. Tomsett (2015. P. 184) talks about

growing truly great teaching with colleagues whose moral compass has been unaffected by the movement of political magnetic poles; colleagues whose priorities have focussed unerringly upon doing what is best for the children in their schools ...colleagues whose schools continue to be liberated by love not frozen with fear.

In such possible 'impossible worlds', teacher and learner agency is forefronted and developed as a true and fundamental creative act of self-formation. The 'lack' that can characterise teachers experiencing the 'terrors of performativity', can lead to more lack in a destructive downward spiral (Ruti 2006). However, 'the individual who has learned to transform lack into meaning or value has gained possession of one of life's most precious gifts' (Ruti 2006: p.33); for teachers, this is the 'art of teaching'.

We need to work forwards to something new; a teaching profession where strong senses of creative identity and agency can help student teachers and NQTs to begin, survive and thrive in their careers, in a way that allows them to be true to themselves, even in the challenging performative culture of primary ITE and primary education. The role of ITE therefore, can be to facilitate, encourage and develop a new generation of teachers, empowered with the professional confidence to live out their active definitions and expressions of creativity, approaching teaching and learning creatively to help children achieve everything of which they are capable in all areas of their young lives. If we can do this, we will indeed have made our mark, for the enrichment of teachers and pupils.

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## **Appendices**

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Appendix 1: Short interview transcript extract with notes (Simon's interview)

Appendix 2: 'Talk about Teaching' conference proposal

Appendix 23 'Talk about Teaching' conference summary and photographs

Appendix 4: Line of enquiry evidence summary sheet, for Ofsted inspection

Appendix 5: Final school placement grading: BA Primary Education, 2019

**Appendix 1: Short interview transcript extract with notes (Simon's interview)**

Person	Transcript section	Transcript	Research notes
PR	33	<b>I guess it's a question that will be difficult to answer but I'll ask it anyway. Is it the extent to which that is [the case] at this school or whether it's the entire system, because one of the good things in my job is I see a lot of different contexts.</b>	<p>Impact of school ethos/expectations</p> <p>Impact of Ofsted grading</p> <p>Performative pressure on Heads</p>
SM	34	I think it depends on the head teacher.	
PR	35	<b>Every school is facing the same pressures.</b>	
SM	36	Yeah. I don't think it's to do with the...yeah I think it's very dependent on what your school do and how much leeway you have and how much they have in you as a teacher, and it especially depends if the school is in 'requires improvement', because when you-	
PR	37	<b>Is that the case here?</b>	
SM	38	No they're going for 'outstanding' so it's all on grades, because like when we looked at all that evidence, if a school, once the correlation of the school has got good attainment, it's automatically an outstanding school every time, so that's why they're drilling it because they know that if they get their grades up it's easier to get outstanding school, and to drive that up. I think when you say, because we usually talk about that but they don't actually tell you how to do this, but I think head teachers are pressured in a way that they think 'right we've got to do it the way Ofsted say so we can get up	

		there', even though Ofsted don't say it I think it's heavily prescribed, if you get your grades up then you get that.	
PR	39	<b>So before we actually started recording you used the phrase we kicked around this idea of someone's creativity versus performativity and that kind of battle, you described it as a losing battle, you've since described it as a lost battle, which is a bit depressing.</b>	Performativity vs creativity - battle
SM	40	It is and it's so depressing. I was sat the other day thinking 'what am I going to do if my ideologies are questioned through the whole system that we're going into?', and I think the problem is that it's an accountability nightmare because teachers have to show, teachers have to show that they're teaching the children through this progression, and they're so pressured, especially in this school, year 6 and year 2 are so stressed to get the children where they want, and it's becoming very regimented.	Losing/lost battle esp Y 2/6  Accountability pressures  Stress  Regimentation
PR	41	<b>You're not in the strongest power position as a student teacher, which is a contributing factor. Again looking ahead to September when you're in a, I fully expect you to be in employment fingers crossed if you haven't been too disillusioned, a full member of staff, how would you...in similar circumstances as this, how would you, do you just give up that battle, is it just inevitable or is it worth fighting for?</b>	NQT agency/power?
SM	42	Yeah, 100%.	Battle worth fighting for
PR	43	<b>How do you...in really practical terms, and the answer to this can only be general, how would you try to demonstrate,</b>	Showing creativity in a performative climate



		<p><b>things like problem solving, divergent thinking, dialogic teaching, those sorts of things that you're saying, and they've opened up children's creative opportunities, how would you actually try and...to an induction, to a mentor, to a key stage student, to a deputy head to a head, an assessment manager, the people who are holding you accountable, or even parents, how would you actually demonstrate the value of those kind of approaches?</b></p>	
SM	44	<p>I think loads of stuff can be done with videos, so recording what they children are saying, I think if we can get this kind of open-ended situations where the children have to make their own decisions, and once they've got out of that fear of failure, the fear of just getting one right answer, I think that becomes much easier. I think in a practical sense we can do in P for C lessons loads of open-ended discussions, and then bring it back to independent work as well; forming their own opinions from these discussions, looking at, because obviously I'm not saying...we have to teach the basics, but I think there's an over-dependency to rely on just teaching the basics.</p>	<p>Creativity in practice</p> <p>Fear of failure-classroom environment</p> <p>Demonstrating performance</p>
PR	45	<p><b>Is there a judgement to be made, do you ever make the judgement about whether to use or encourage creative approaches in the times when it's just actually 'I'm just going to show you, tell you' because that's actually the best way to do it.</b></p>	<p>Creativity or not?</p> <p>Pressures of performativity?</p>
SM	46	<p>Yeah, so when we were doing mixed number fractions adding to, so adding mixed number fractions together, so I sort of gave it to them at the start and then said 'right what can we do, how do we solve it?', and then</p>	

		<p>say 'right well this is how we do it, that is the way we do it, so that is the regimented way, now I could have then said 'answer these 10 questions to show me that you can do it', but if they can do why do they have to show me ten times that they can do it and not extend their learning, whereas if I say 'okay this is the answer, what is the question, how can we get there?', showing a deeper understanding of the process of how they're doing it instead of just making them do it over and over again and practice that basic skill.</p>	
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## Appendix 2: Talking about Teaching' conference proposal Form

Talking about Teaching' 23rd January 2015. Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Proposal Form

Proposals should be submitted electronically to Emma Sunley by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

<b>Name(s) of presenters</b>	Peter Raymond
<b>Title of proposal</b>	Assessed presentations – genuine creativity vs “Death by PowerPoint”
<b>Faculty/Department</b>	Education and Theology
<b>Format (TLC/Workshop)</b>	TLC
<b>Session Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how rigorous level 3 academic assessment can take place alongside real freedom for students to approach assessed presentations in ways of their choosing.</li> <li>• Rethink approaches to assessed presentations.</li> </ul>
<b>Session Outline</b> (no more than 300 words)	<p>Please provide an indication as how your session addresses the theme of the conference</p> <p>TLC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VERY brief outline of the module “<i>Creativity in Primary Education</i>” and its assessment.</li> <li>• Highlighting concerns from staff and students about the existing assessment and how in 2013/14 this was opened up to student choice without sacrificing academic rigour.</li> <li>• Brief extracts from student presentations that show how the presentations were approached and how academic rigour was not only maintained, but improved.</li> <li>• This links to the conference theme in that is a good practice case study of opening up assessments at level 3, allowing students to respond in ways of their choosing. This a good example of a change/innovation I made to my assessment practice that had an impact on my students that I want to share and explore further with others.</li> </ul>

	<p>Discussion:</p> <p>This could be open to audience questions/comments or could explore themes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pros and cons of such an approach to assessment.</li> <li>• How far does/can freedom go without sacrificing academic rigour?</li> <li>• Helping students and staff to avoid the “all style, no substance” trap.</li> </ul>
<b>Session activities and timings</b>	<p>Please provide an indication of how the session will be structured and how activities and discussion will be facilitated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 minute presentation as above.</li> <li>• 5 minutes made of two or three video extracts of innovative student assessed presentations with brief introduction/commentary.</li> <li>• 10 minutes facilitated discussion, as above.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3: 'Talk about Teaching' conference summary and photographs

### Talk About Teaching 2015 - Teaching and Learning Conversation

#### Assessed presentations – genuine creativity vs “Death by PowerPoint”

- An example of a change/innovation I made to my assessment practice that had an impact on my students that I want to share and explore further with others.

#### Context

- Creativity and Communication in Primary Education - year 3 elective. Running since September 2009 and this year was its final run in its current form.
- Assessment – 40% group presentation, 60% essay.
- Critical discussion of two key theorists' perspectives on creativity and the application of their ideas in a typical primary classroom.
- Consistently very strong module feedback apart from the assessed presentation – ironically it was seen as NOT allowing or encouraging freedom of creative expression.
- Default response (and default expectation from staff?) was a PowerPoint with an accompanying display board.

#### Response to concerns

- 2012 – students encouraged to develop varied methods of response – very little variation and the same feedback.
- 2013 – students strongly encouraged to develop varied methods of response, referring explicitly to previous module feedback – greater variation and the first use of drama as a presentation tool.
- 2014 - students very strongly encouraged to develop varied methods of response, referring explicitly to previous year's assessment – all groups used non-PowerPoint approaches, generally dramatic scenarios.

#### 2013 and 2014

- Decision amongst module team to open up the assessment to greater student choice.
- Focus was on considering alternative forms of presentation without sacrificing academic rigour.

Remember – assessment focus was on critically engaging with two key theorists and applying to primary practice.

- 2013 – all groups bar one tried something different.
- 2014 – all groups tried something different

#### Examples

- CSI                      - Staff meeting                      - Apprentice                      - Couples therapy

#### Good example 2013

**CSI – creativity has been murdered in a primary school**

- Dramatic set up
- CSI examiners as the two key theorists
- Head and Detective
- CSI theorists explained why creativity had died based on evidence they found.
- Consistent engagement with reading – criticality came through the challenge they presented to each other using their own theorist perspectives as they discussed the crime scene.
- Head and detective challenged views using other reading
- Head and Detective also began to synthesise viewpoints and theorists acknowledged common ground.

Outcome:

- The dramatic approach enhanced the critical engagement and academic rigour
- 88%

### **Good example 2014**

The Apprentice:

- Two theorists are the final two in Lord Sugar's process – pitching for £250,000 to set up teaching and learning based on their ideas.
- They argued for their different perspectives and challenging each other
- Lord Sugar and Nick/Karen, questioned, challenged,
- Consistent use of reading to support points (another group had nice addition of rolling laptop PowerPoint with key quotes, references as they were being used.)
- One was “hired – i.e. the group reached an evidence-based conclusion on which of the two had more potential if applied in a primary classroom.

Outcome:

- The dramatic approach enhanced the critical engagement and academic rigour
- 76%

### **What was needed to make this work?**

- Creativity of students and staff – not in the use of drama but in willingness to try something different.
- Willingness to take risks – staff and students (level 3) - simply doing something other than a safe PowerPoint.
- “Permission” for students to try something new – explicit staff support, and encouragement was crucial.
- Support to help students focus on substance over style – the alternative approach MUST ENHANCE the academic rigour – stay focused on assessment criteria for level 3, not the drama!

### **Outcomes**

- Higher average marks for presentations than previous years
- Higher average marks for essays than previous years – deeper understanding of critical engagement?

- 2013 and 2014 – students enjoyed and were more engaged in assessments and much improved feedback about assessment.
- Staff and students had fun enjoying the engagement in academically rigorous assessment
- Far from “dumbing down”, the alternatives enhanced academic rigour.

#### **Discussion:**

- Audience questions/comments?
- 

**And/or we could explore themes such as:**

- Pros and cons of such an approach to assessment.
- How far does/can freedom go without sacrificing academic rigour?
- Helping students and staff to avoid the “all style, no substance” trap.

**CSI – creativity has been murdered in this school!**



## Froebel and Heathcote pitch in “The Apprentice”

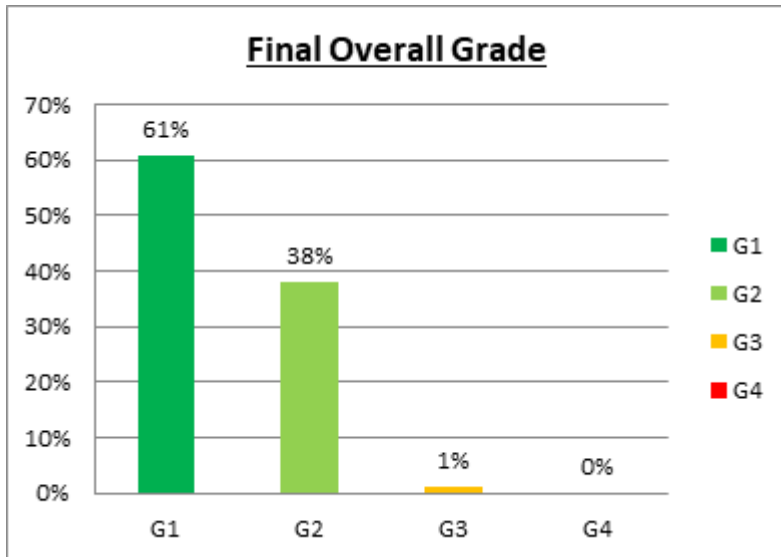




#### Appendix 4: Line of enquiry evidence summary for Ofsted inspection, part two, 2017

<b>Primary Partnership 2 - The judgements reached about how well trainees teach do not always take account of the impact their teaching strategies are having on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils in their class.</b>	
Partnership Position	Evidence of Impact Post Part 1
<p>This L o E summary should be read in conjunction with L of E 3.</p> <p>Pupil progress has been a key improvement priority for the partnership for the past year. By the end of 2016-17, there were a greater number of student teachers achieving either Grade 1 or 2 for TS2. Pupil progress is now judged as a key indicator in York St John (YSJ) lesson appraisals and informs the exit appraisal process as part of the exit interviews. Promoting and monitoring progress is covered within both professional studies and within subject-based sessions. Many assessments within modules now have a focus on assessing and planning for progression and trainees now have to gather data related to pupil progress on placement. Within sessions, tutors make effective use of real classroom examples to model and then scaffold the trainee's ability to plan for progression not only during a lesson but over a series of lessons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% of UG Y3 stated their preparation to promote pupil progress was either very good or good (October 2017).</li> <li>In July 2017, 94% of exiting student teachers stated that their training was either very good or good in developing 'understanding of how your teaching can more successfully enhance the learning and progress of pupils with different needs.'</li> <li>TS2 grades have risen over the last three years: 97% of student teachers now achieve Grade 1 or 2 with 45% achieving Grade 1.</li> <li>Similarly, TS5 grades have increased to 97% Grade 1/2 and 39% Grade 1. Both TS2 and TS5 remain on the improvement plan.</li> <li>There has been a 3 year on year increase (+15%) in employing headteachers identifying training for their NQTS as being either very good or good in this area.</li> <li>The exit survey also identifies further increases- feedback to support progress = 94%, planning for progress for all = 96%, assessing progress = 90%.</li> <li>2016-17 target-setting data evidences mentors' focus on TS2. The impact of this is further evidenced by the reduction in TS2 targets by the time students completed the programme (9% of NQT targets were related to TS in 2017).</li> </ul>

<p>Nevertheless, we are aware that this standard still has relatively lower outcomes in comparison to others so it remains a priority for 2017-18. This is supported by our ongoing focus on TS5, particularly EAL, SEN, disadvantaged and higher attaining children. We will work closely with the full partnership during 2017-18 to further refine our provision and have put in place a number of improvement actions. This maintains our relentless focus on improving the quality of provision and outcomes for our trainees.</p>			
Improvement Actions		Supporting Evidence	
Completed so far	Scheduled for 17-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary SED SE data</li> <li>TS5 tracker</li> <li><b>TS2</b> Good to Outstanding booklet</li> <li>M and A exit interview s</li> <li>CPD tracker</li> <li>SE Documentation</li> <li>Case studies</li> <li>NQT website</li> <li>Primary SE School-based tasks</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TS2 School-based task added to final month of PGCE 2016-17 placement</li> <li>Exit interview questions now used in SE2</li> <li>Use of Student Tracking and Support System (STASS) to track grades at both interim and final report point allowing for TS2 focused intervention mid- and pre-placement</li> <li>Refining of the exit interview and evidence file with a clearer focus on pupil progress across groups</li> <li>Differing needs tracker across all programmes to track trainee experience and inform judgements</li> <li>Mentor training materials rewritten</li> <li>Changes made to assignments to highlight pupil progress across groups</li> <li>M and A event with partnership colleagues –using data to promote progress for all - scheduled for Nov 2017</li> <li>Clearer focus on pupil progress within professional and subject-based sessions</li> <li>Timeline established for new appraisal pro-forma development</li> <li>TS2 Good to Outstanding support booklets</li> <li>Pupil progress information now available on the NQT website</li> <li>Pupil progress coverage mapped across primary programmes</li> <li>See also actions under line of Enquiry 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of 'learning fronted' appraisal pro-forma with Primary Steering Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Session materials</li> <li>Link tutor and mentor support</li> </ul>	

**Appendix 5: Final school placement grading: BA Primary Education, 2019**

G1 = outstanding

G2 = good

G3 = requires improvement

G4 = inadequate